

"A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY"
An Introduction of Whiteheadian Theology
To Lay People

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Merle Douglas Lehman

June 1975

Merle Douglas Lehman

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

John B Cobb Jr
Patricia Martin Doyle

May 22, 1975
Date

Joseph C. Haugh, Jr.
Dean

This is for Anita

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment is given to the following publishers for permission to use excerpts from the following books:

In Sessions 1, 4 and 6, Adventures of Ideas by A.N. Whitehead, The Macmillan Co., copyright, 1967

In Session 2, The Spirit and the Forms of Love by D.D. Williams, Harper & Row, copyright, 1968

In Session 4, The Becoming of the Church by Bernard Lee, Paulist Press, copyright, 1974

In Session 5, God and the World, by John Cobb, Jr., Westminster Press, copyright, 1969

In Session 6, Religion in the Making by A.N. Whitehead, The Macmillan Co., 1926

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	viii
Session	
1. GOD IS LOVE.....	1
Lecture: "A Still More Excellent Way".....	2
A Game Designed to Get in Touch with Change...	20
Study Paper by Whitehead on "Persuasion".....	21
2. GOD WORKS THROUGH PERSUASION.....	26
Art Form and Discussion on Beauty and Persuasion.....	27
Lecture: "The Whiteheadian Doctrine of God"...	27
Study Paper by Williams on Process Theology...	45
3. REALITY IS EVENTS: EVENTS RELATE THROUGH FEELING.....	51
Lecture: "The Private and Public Lives of an Actual Occasion.....	53
Game: Art Project on Acting Out the Becoming of an Actual Occasion.....	72
4. EVERYTHING IS INTERRELATED, INCLUDING GOD AND THE WORLD.....	74
Lecture: "We Are in it Together".....	75
Study Papers by Lee and Whitehead and Art Form: Painting Visual Impressions.....	91
5. EVERYTHING IS IN PROCESS, INCLUDING GOD.....	97
Study Paper by Cobb on "The One Who Calls"....	98
Lecture: "The Open Future".....	104
Guided Discussion on Personal Experience.....	122

6. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND THE PEACE OF GOD.....	124
Study Paper by Whitehead on "Peace".....	125
Lecture: "Our Experience of God".....	128
Closing Celebration.....	148
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	154
GLOSSARY.....	158

ABSTRACT

This is a course in adult education which attempts to present a vision of reality based on the insights of the Anglo-American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. This model is one attempt to popularize the Whiteheadian vision. It is motivated by the conviction that the time is ripe for a fresh metaphysical view of reality which is true to Christian sensitivity, true to modern scientific theories, and also understands God to be a real factor in the makeup of the universe.

Six basic statements which summarize Whitehead's vision of reality and the basic contents of this course are: God is love, God works through persuasion, not coercion, reality is events, events relate through feeling, everything is interrelated, and everything is in process, including God.

The course is composed of lectures, brief papers, guided discussions, games, an art form and an art project. It ends with a worship celebration. There are six sessions.

Our basic vision of reality, i.e., our thought patterns and assumptions about how things relate have been shifting for 300 years. The old two-story universe in which we lived so long, seeing God as the transcendent and eternal creator in the heavens, has come tumbling down. There is a crisis of faith and a need for a fresh metaphysics on which

to base Christian theology. This "still more excellent way" of interpreting the Christian experience that God is love is Whiteheadian theology.

Whitehead's vision of reality is one in which everything is interrelated--"a philosophy of organism." As the world needs God in order to exist, God also needs the world in order to exist. God does not create the world through coercion, but is the principle of order and the source of novelty, persuading the world to fulfill its highest potential.

Reality is ultimately events, "actual occasions," which arise and perish in a fraction of a second. The occasions relate to one another through feeling, the transmission of energy from a completed occasion to a becoming occasion. This can be diagrammed by using asterisks to denote the bundle of feelings which make up an occasion and an arrow to denote the vector relationship through which a past occasion gives its synthesis of feelings to the present occasion:



A circle denotes a completed occasion.

Because reality is events which constitute themselves by synthesizing feelings from antecedent occasions and from God, process theology has a metaphysics of relativity. The interrelatedness of everything has profound consequences for our understanding of interpersonal relationships, our values regarding the environment and our understanding of science and natural law. It also forms the basis of a radical reconception of God and God's relationship with the world. The future is radically open.

Since experience is prior to consciousness, our religious experience can be understood as a more basic way of knowing than sensory perception. Process theologians have also been working on ways of interpreting Christology in which Jesus and God enjoy a mutual indwelling which is historically, but not metaphysically, unique.

The ultimate religious experience is what Whitehead calls "Peace," which is imaged as a Whiteheadian Mandala.

The closing celebration can be done with decor provided by art forms painted by the participants in response to readings in prior sessions, and by the design produced during a game simulating the becoming of an actual occasion. A group or "cosmic hug" is described as a possible action. The course is intended to be resource material for introducing lay people to Whiteheadian theology. A glossary is included.

INTRODUCTION

This is a course in adult education which attempts to present a vision of reality based on the insights of the Anglo-American philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead's thought, which is a primary example of "process philosophy," provides a refreshing and fruitful approach for conceptualizing the nature of reality, the reality of God, and the way God and the world are related to each other. A growing number of theologians and ministers are finding process theology a satisfying way to interpret the Christian faith and the experiences of life from a perspective which does justice to the basic biblical witness, historic Christian experience and a contemporary scientific world-view.

The Whiteheadian approach to theology has been around for a number of years but has been confined to certain faculties in theology or philosophy. The insights of process theology have not had widespread currency, and lay people have not had the opportunity to entertain these insights. This is partially due to the fact that Whitehead used a technical vocabulary which is difficult to understand. Like other highly creative thinkers before him he found that existing words were not adequate to carry the meanings he sought to convey, so he had to coin some new

words, or use existing words in very precise technical ways in order to point to the depth of his insights. If one is motivated enough to learn this new, technical jargon, the new insights are communicated, but they do not lend themselves to popular distribution.

This model is one attempt to popularize the Whiteheadian vision. It is motivated by the conviction that the time is ripe for a fresh metaphysical view of reality, a view which is true to Christian sensitivity, true to modern scientific theories of relativity and quantum physics, and at the same time understands God to be a real factor in the make-up of the universe. Whiteheadian theology is an answer to the crisis of faith--a crisis which has culminated in seeing God as dead, or as merely a symbol of human goodness or a label for creativity. The issue of our time is the doctrine of God and whether the term "God" points to anything real in itself. Whiteheadian theology gives a foundation for believing in the literal reality of God.

This work will seek to tread the razor's edge between oversimplifying to the point of superficiality and being too technical to be readily understandable. In presenting this to lay people we are presupposing Whitehead's own presuppositions concerning education. These underlying ideas are not unfamiliar to anyone engaged in adult education today, but it is interesting to note they were articu-

lated by Whitehead early in this century in addresses to English educators and first published in 1917 and in 1922. Briefly, these presuppositions are: 1) the mind is active, not passive, and is always learning; 2) ideas must be able to be utilized in the learner's life situation; 3) learning occurs in cycles, which Whitehead names "romance," "precision," and "generalization;" 4) in teaching, do not teach too many subjects and 5) what you teach, teach thoroughly.¹

Another basic principle which underlies all of Whiteheadian thought and which has relevance to the learning process is that each person is a subject to be persuaded, not an object to be coerced. In the creation and use of the resources in this model, it is recognized that the learning adults bring their own experiences to the process. Each person is a subject with a contribution to make and the course must be taught in a participatory manner if it is to be true to its Whiteheadian roots.

The desired outcome of the course is the insight of how Whitehead's vision of reality rings true for me and illuminates my existence and my experience of God. If this insight is reached, it will be as the learner is persuaded that these ideas really can be utilized and can shed light

¹Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education (New York: Macmillan, 1967) pp. 1-28.

on his/her situation. The persuasion will begin with the cycle of "romance," which is the excitement of novelty and of the possibilities of unexplored connections. In the stage of "precision" the content of the subject matter of the romance is analyzed. New knowledge is gained; new facts are added. Unless interest is excited in the stage of romance, there will be nothing of interest to analyze in the stage of precision. The final stage of generalization is a deeper version of romance. Now there are facts, techniques and a structure of ideas which can clarify the interrelations of the ideas and how they can be utilized.

Six basic statements which summarize Whitehead's vision of reality and the basic contents of this course are: 1) God is love, 2) God works through persuasion, 3) reality is events, 4) events relate through feeling, 5) everything is interrelated, including God and the world, and 6) everything is in process, including God. The course will attempt to clarify and give content to these statements and the key words: love, persuasion, events, feeling, interrelated and process. The first five sessions deal with these six statements. The sixth session is on the topic of "peace."

The course is composed of lectures, brief papers, guided discussions, games, an art form and an art project.

It ends with a closing worship celebration. The lectures are the backbone of the course because of the need to communicate new information. It is assumed that the lectures and papers will be discussed and that time will be set aside for this. The papers and a glossary are included in an appendix.

This model is not presented with a suggested setting or schedule. It is presented as resource material. But, it would be best used in a setting which provides continuity for the sessions, like a week-end retreat.

SESSION 1

GOD IS LOVE

The aims of this first session are to put the participants in touch with their own experiences of God as love and with the changes which have taken place in the past three hundred years which have created a cultural crisis of faith in the reality of God. The lecture seeks to explain why theology does and must use philosophy in interpreting and communicating the gospel, how the current crisis of faith came to be and how Christian theology of the last two hundred years has tried to cope with it. Whiteheadian process theology is pointed to as an answer to this crisis.

The game following the lecture provides a means for the participants to begin to get acquainted with one another and to reflect on how their lives have changed in the past few years. It is hoped that through the lecture, discussion and game, the insight will emerge that God's love remains constant through inevitable change and change can be affirmed.

The study paper provides an introduction to Whitehead's writing and serves as a bridge to the content of Session Two.

Lecture: "A Still More Excellent Way"

St. Paul had a few things to say about the love of God and about our relationship with God. Listen:

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹

Paul's fierce contention, which is based on his experience of God's love in Jesus Christ, is that there is no kind of change which can separate us from that love.

No matter how circumstances may change, God is still for us, and that relationship of love which we have experienced through Jesus Christ cannot be broken. This is a basic insight of the Christian faith and the heart of Christian experience. He wrote about this in his letter to the Romans.

In another letter, the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote his famous essay describing love as

¹Romans 8:31-35, 37-39.

the highest gift of the Holy Spirit.. That is I Corinthians 13. Did you ever notice how that chapter is introduced-- what the last sentence is in chapter 12? In chapter 12, he has characterized the church as one body with many members, all of whom have certain gifts which contribute to the whole body. Each one has his own thing, his own insight. And the last sentence is: "And I will show you a still more excellent way: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love..."

From the time of Paul to this very hour the members of the Christian church have tried to communicate their experience of the love of God and to clarify the meaning of God's relationship with the world in ever more "still more excellent" ways. The attempt to communicate and to clarify Christian experience and Christian faith is theology. And just as the church has many members in one body, each of whom has a different gift to contribute to the whole, there have also been many different theologies which have sought to understand and communicate how it is that God is related to us in love, a love from which we cannot be separated.

There have been many changes from Paul's time to now. The language in which Paul's thoughts about God's love were originally expressed was Greek. He wrote:...

τὴς κτίσεως ἕτερον συνήσεται ἡμᾶς, χαρίσας

4

ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ
Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.²

You understand that, don't you? Why not? The Christians who received Paul's letter did. A language is a form through which the Christian faith is communicated, and because of the changes of time and place, one language has replaced another as the viable form, the understandable vehicle to carry the meaning. Not only is there a succession in time from one language to another, from Greek to Latin, to Middle English, etc., there have also been translations into many different languages at the same time.

Would you say that because you understand the meaning of the Christian faith conveyed in one language, that that language is the right one and therefore all the other languages are wrong? Of course not. We would say that each language is right in so far as it is appropriate and really does communicate clearly the meaning of the Christian faith to those who live in the world of that language.

What has been said about language and the Christian faith is also true for theology. Language and theology are closely related. As the members of the body of Christ have stretched out in space and time, we have found

²Romans 8:39^c in Bible, N. T. Greek, Novum Testamentum Graece (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1948).

ourselves in different worlds of language and of thought patterns. The Bible itself reflects some of the different thought patterns which were current at the time it was written. The two most important ones reflected in the Bible are the Middle Eastern Jewish and the Greek.

By a thought pattern I mean more than language and the meaning of words. I mean the way a person thinks, a people's world view, the unspoken presuppositions which people casually label "common sense." Every culture has its own thought patterns which are so taken for granted they are never, or hardly ever, talked about. These thought patterns are the unspoken presuppositions about the way things relate to each other, how it all fits together, what is really real, and what is of value. You might call it a culture's "vision of reality."³ A culture's thought patterns, i.e., the way people think, move within some vision of reality--science, art, religion--all are rooted in some set of thought patterns.

In the same way that the communication of the Christian faith must be expressed through some language, it must also be expressed through some thought pattern.

³For this phrase and many of the ideas in the lecture relating to the history of theology, I am indebted to John Cobb, God and the World (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 117-138.

The Christian experience of God's love does not happen apart from people; it does not happen in a vacuum, and people speak some particular language and think within some vision of reality. This is why theology, the communication and clarification of Christian faith, cannot be separated from philosophy, the articulation of a vision of reality. Every theology is written in some language and presupposes some kind of philosophy. The Christian faith does not come with its own vehicle. If it is to be communicated, clarified, understood, it must ride on the language and thought patterns of a particular culture.

So, like language, a theology is not right or wrong. It is more or less adequate to convey the meaning of the Christian faith to the people who live within a particular vision of reality. Of course no theology can fully comprehend the depths of God's love. As Charles Wesley writes in his hymn, "Love divine, all loves excelling...pure, unbounded love thou art." God's love is unbounded, infinite, and can never be fully grasped and contained. But it can be pointed to and talked about more or less adequately.

For instance, we see within the New Testament itself the beginning of the first change from one vehicle to another, the change from the Jewish thought patterns of Jesus and the first Palestinian Jewish disciples to the Greek thought patterns of converted Hellenistic Jews and

Greeks. The first big controversy within the church was whether Paul's Gentile converts had to become Jews before they could be Christians. Paul said, "No!" and thereby laid the foundation for Christianity to be a universal religion which could adapt and change, rather than being confined within the thought patterns of a Jewish messianic sect. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., the Aramaic speaking Jewish branch of the church withered, and the vigorous thrust of mission was carried by the Greek speaking, Greek thinking Jewish and Gentile Christians. So the first theologizing (after the initial Jewish events) took place within a Greek vision of reality. The language of the early creeds was the language of Greek philosophy. The discussions about the two natures of Christ, the relationship of Jesus to God and to human existence and the doctrine of the Trinity were all carried on within a context set by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, the great Greek philosophers.

This Greek vision of reality or metaphysics saw God and the world in a two-story universe. The upper story was the realm of the unchanging, the perfect, the permanent, the eternal. The lower story was the arena of history, of change, impermanence, imperfection, the temporal (i.e., in time). The upper story was the realm of being, of essence, of reality. The lower story was the arena of becoming, of

existence, of illusion, or if not illusion, of a kind of derived reality.

It was within this framework of thought patterns that the communication and clarification of the Christian experience, of God's love was carried out for 15 or 16 centuries in Europe. Greek philosophical categories and Jewish biblical ideas did not always fit together very well, but they tried to bring them together. What else could they do? It was the way they thought. They took Aristotle's description of what God had to be like--permanent and perfect, i.e., unchanging and impassive, the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover, who needs nothing outside of himself, who is enrapt in contemplation of his own perfection and who draws the world toward himself like a giant magnet, without effort and without interacting with the world--this conception was wedded to the biblical experience of God as active in history, intimately involved with the world, loving us so much that he participates in human life in Jesus Christ who dies on the cross.

Out of this marriage were born the early creeds and the Catholic theology of Thomas Aquinas. In the Nicene Creed we have language like:

...God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for

us men and for our salvation came down from heaven...⁴
 That sounds strange to us now because we no longer think in Greek. But when that was written, every word was chosen very carefully to try to convey the meaning of God's love for us from which we cannot be separated.

"...being of one substance with the Father..." The notion of substance has been very important in both philosophy and theology. Substance, in Greek thought, is that which is really real. The philosophers have talked about substance and accidents. Substance was the stuff of reality, the "thatness" of anything, the underlying substratum of things, the thing-in-itself, its being. Accidents were qualities: the color, the texture, smell, taste, etc. The substance, or being, of a thing could not in itself be seen or touched. All that could be apprehended were the accidental qualities of a thing. So the substance was the basic reality, the essence, the being of anything while the accidental qualities could change--something could be white instead of red, hot instead of cold, etc.

This is the philosophical notion on which the

⁴The Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964), #739.

Roman Catholic theological doctrine of Holy Communion was based. The doctrine was that the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Jesus. How does this happen? It was explained by the notion of "transubstantiation" which means that the substance, the reality, the being, of the bread and wine is transformed. The outward appearance, the accidental qualities of the bread and wine, the color, taste, smell, remain the same, while the substance, the inner reality is changed into the reality of the body and blood of Christ. There is a switching of substances, the elements undergo trans-substantiation. Isn't that slick?

I have used transubstantiation for two purposes: one, to illustrate the meaning of substance in the philosophical sense, and two, to show how theology uses philosophy in order to try to communicate religious meaning. The notion of substance is a static notion. It is a way of talking about reality, about being, in which the appearance, the qualities, change, but the underlying reality does not change. Transubstantiation is a miracle, you see, because ordinarily you can't move substances around. In every other case, it is the accidental qualities which change. The substance is what endures through time and changes. That is why it is "substantial." In the Greek view, reality by definition does not change, and since God is the highest

reality, God does not change.

So for centuries the Christian understanding of how God and the world are related presupposed a vision of reality based on an amalgamation of Greek and Hebrew concepts. It was a pre-scientific world-view with God up there and the world down here, but, at the same time, God was the Creator of the world and was the unchanging Reality which grounded the fleeting flux of this world. It was presupposed that this world is the creation of God and there was an underlying substance in all things. In human beings this underlying substance was called the soul. In the Greek conception, the soul flew out of the body at death and went back up to heaven, since it was the real part of a person, imprisoned in the flesh but longing to get back to God. In one of the Jewish versions, the soul went to Sheol, the place of the dead, and waited there for the resurrection. These various ideas have co-existed in Christian thought through the years.

Today we live in a different vision of reality. We have a scientific vision which has steadily grown stronger during the past 300 years. As the implications of a scientific view of the universe have been internalized more and more, the old Christian vision based on Greek and Hebrew concepts has been eroded until we are now in what some have

called a "crisis of faith." What has happened is that the second story of the old two-story universe has collapsed. So the theological issue of our time has become the reality of God, the doctrine of God. Since heaven has collapsed, where is God? And now how is God related to the world? I will try to briefly sketch how we got to where we are now and how Christian theology has sought to cope with the issue.

You probably remember the story of how an apple fell on Sir Isaac Newton's head, an event which supposedly set him thinking about the law of gravity. The fall of this apple did not immediately banish God from our culture's vision of reality, but it did cause a change. At the beginning of the modern scientific era, in the 1600's, when the tools of scientific experimentation and research were being discovered and developed, two things happened. First, there was a shift of interest from heaven to earth, i.e., the subject and focal point of thought and excitement became this world and what makes it tick, rather than the other world and how to get there. Second, it was discovered that this world seems to work according to laws, according to what became known as "natural laws." Instead of God being the direct cause of the sun coming up and the rain falling down and the grass growing, etc., it was seen

that the universe was running according to certain laws and with an order. There was "law and order!" But no one doubted that God is the Creator; so instead of being the direct cause, God was re-conceived to be the author of natural law, the designer of the machinery of the universe. The world was pictured as a machine, like a clock, and God was pictured as the clock-maker. Some even thought of God as the clock-maker who wound up the clock and then walked away, leaving the universe to tick away on its own. The worldview of Newtonian physics still had a place for God as creator and law-giver. And there was still thought to be a reality lying underneath that which could be observed and measured.

Then David Hume in Scotland and Immanuel Kant in Germany dropped their philosophical bombs. Kant pointed out that even if there is such a thing as an underlying substance, we can't know anything about it. All we can know about is what can be observed from the outside. Science and pure reason can discern nothing about the "thing-in-itself." All we can know about with certainty is what the old boys called the accidental qualities of a thing--the size, shape, color, weight, taste, etc.--that with which science can deal. This is what Kant called the "phenomena" of things. The inner reality or the thing-in-

itself he called the "noumena." Furthermore, said Kant in his German accent, we can't know anything for sure about God-in-himself either. What we can know is how people orient themselves toward God and this is primarily through the moral sense, the sense of what I ought to do, the sense of ethics. Belief in God's existence must, for Kant, be based entirely on faith. There are no proofs to be derived from the created order.

Hume came along and in his Scottish brogue asked, why is there any reason to suppose that there is any sort of reality or cause underlying the sensations we perceive? All we can really know is that there is a succession of sensations in themselves. Now, this was "sensational" in both senses of the word. It caused a stir and it was the first time that a philosopher articulated what has become the modern vision of reality, a vision which does not presuppose a Creator, but sees the phenomena of this world as self-caused and self-sustained. Science no longer needed God as a hypothesis to explain how things come to be.

Then began the erosion of the old Christian vision of reality with Christian theologians fighting a rear-guard battle for space against the encroachment of the modern scientific vision. God as Creator became the "God of the gaps." Wherever there was a gap in scientific knowledge,

God was stuck in by the religious to provide an explanation of causation. The Germans tried to handle the issue by compartmentalizing knowledge completely, putting science as the study of the natural world, the phenomena, over there, and the humanities, anything having to do with the human spirit, the inner life, the noumena, (philosophy, theology, history) over here, completely isolated from one another.

So the relation between God and the world became narrowed to the human spirit, the soul or human consciousness as the point of contact. In the 19th century, the great liberal German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, wrote a systematic theology based on "the feeling of absolute dependence" of the human being on God. He said there are three areas of inquiry: one is science, the second is ethics and the third is religion, which is centered in human feelings, in human consciousness of the absolute.

In the 20th century, Rudolph Bultmann continued this tradition of Kant and Schleiermacher, that we can't know anything about God in himself, and what theology must study and articulate is the consciousness, i.e., the faith, of the Christian. Karl Barth also abandoned the natural world to science and compartmentalized theology. He, however, revolted against the liberalism of Schleiermacher and said that God does not relate to the world through the

human religious consciousness or feelings. God does not relate to the world at all--God is utterly transcendent. Except, God has touched the world through Jesus Christ. For Barth, theology did not have the task of clarifying the relationship of God and the world and to communicate this to the world. Theology's task was to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with no philosophical explanation or justification.

A similar compartmentalization has taken place among us English-speaking Christians. The extreme manifestation of this are the fundamentalists, who instinctually seem to understand better than we liberals that the old Christian vision of the world as the creation of God has withered away. They are trying to keep the tide from coming in by rejecting the theory of evolution while at the same time affirming other aspects of the findings of science. They have built an anti-evolutionary pier over the water from which they fish the scientific sea. The rest of us have, to a greater or lesser extent, privatized God, reserving the God relationship for the inner life, and maintaining a vestige of the old Newtonian view, seeing God as somehow, vaguely, the author of natural law and the source of creativity.

The theology of Paul Tillich gave us a surge of new

energy, since he confronted the meaninglessness and anxiety of modern human existence, an existence in which our souls are isolated and the human spirit is shrinking. But although Tillich's conception of God as Being-itself, God in the depths of life, made more sense than God as "up there" and drew a glad response from many of us, his view ultimately draws its breath from the old days of the reality of unseen substance and so is linked with the old withering Christian vision of reality. Tillich's powerful image of the New Being speaks to those of us who have experienced God's love, but his intellectual language is rooted in the past and finally cannot deal adequately with our problem of re-conceiving the meaning of the reality of God and how God is related to the world.

Our basic vision of reality, our presuppositions, our thought patterns and assumptions about how things relate have been shifting for 300 years. The old Greco-Hebrew two-story universe in which we lived for so long, seeing God as the transcendent and eternal Creator in the heavens, has been tumbling down. The sky is falling; Chicken Little was right. And now that, for science itself, the last vestiges of the Newtonian world-view have been swept away by the proof of Einstein's theory of relativity, and now that the last bastion of God's direct contact with

the world, the human soul, has been preempted by depth psychology, the modern vision of reality in which there is no need for God has filled in the last gap. As far as our modern, scientific vision of reality is concerned, Thomas Altizer was right on target when he announced that Nietzsche's 19th century prophecy has been fulfilled in our time: "God is dead."

The so-called "death of God" theologians have tried to take seriously the collapse of the second story. They have tried to do theology, to communicate and clarify the Christian experience of God's love in Jesus Christ, within the new vision of reality which has no place for God. This is why Altizer insisted that, although he was technically an atheist, he was still a Christian. Although the transcendent, creator God was gone, Jesus Christ was still the center of the meaning of life. This heroic, honest attempt is ultimately a dead-end street, however, because the reality of God is finally the source and destination of the Christian experience of faith, hope and love.

The Christian experience and Christian theology cannot be maintained within a vision of reality which has no place for the reality of god. And the Christian experience of the love of God cannot be maintained indefinitely in our present schizophrenic state of limping between two visions of reality. We cannot return to pre-scientific vision. We

cannot live forever on a pier in the water. What is needed is a fresh vision which will incorporate the factual insights of science but will be post-modern in the sense that it recaptures in a fresh way the reality of God and God's creative relationship with the world. We need, in Paul's words, "a still more excellent way" of understanding, communicating and clarifying God's love for and relation to the world.

This more excellent way must be able to re-conceive God in a world of continuous change rather than static substances. It must see God as involved in the creation of the whole universe and not compartmentalized in the human soul. It must see God and the universe as a whole, a totality, and not in bits and pieces, but it must see God as an objective reality, and not as a projection of human desires and qualities. This vision of reality must lay the foundation for faith in the midst of rapid change, so we can lay hold of the future with hope, not holding onto the past, and see the future as open, not closed by scientific determinism. And it must see God as the divine lover from whom nothing can separate us, not as a cosmic clock-maker who makes and enforces natural laws.

I believe a theology based on the views of Alfred North Whitehead can enable us to gain a new vision of reality which will both put us in touch with the biblical experience of God and move us toward a post-modern view while

affirming the findings of modern science. Whiteheadian theology is "a still more excellent way" of communicating and clarifying the meaning of God's love and reality.

The Whiteheadian approach can be summarized by six statements which are interrelated. Two of the statements are assertions about God; two are about the nature of all reality; and two are general statements. They are:

1. God is love.
2. God works through persuasion.
3. Reality is events.
4. Events relate through feeling.
5. Everything is interrelated, including God and the world.
6. Everything is in process, including God.

The other sessions of this course will seek to clarify and give content to these six summary statements.

A Game Designed to Get in Touch with Change

The purpose of this game is to encourage participation and to help the participants get in touch with the constant change going on in their own lives. It is also a get-acquainted game. Depending on the size of the group,

use the whole group or divide up into small groups of six to eight. Sit in a circle and ask each person to respond briefly to questions like these:

1. What is your name and where are you from?
2. Where were you 15 years ago? Visualize yourself then and in that place.
3. What is one thing about you which is different now (besides being older)? Have you changed? How?
4. Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock says we meet more new people in one week than a peasant in the Middle Ages met in a life-time.⁵ Does your experience confirm this? Can you name five people, other than your family, with whom you had close dealings 10 years ago and with whom you still come in contact? Or, how many new people have you come in contact with during the past week?
5. What has been for you the biggest change in life, i.e., in the way people live, between the time you were a child and now?

Study Paper by Whitehead on "Persuasion."

Have the group read and discuss the excerpt from

⁵Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 100.

Adventures of Ideas by Whitehead; Section iv, of "The New Reformation." (pp. 166-169)⁶

166

ADVENTURES OF IDEAS

SECTION IV. I suggest that in the whole period there are three culminating phases which, in theological language, constitute its threefold revelation. The first and the last phases were primarily intellectual with a sufficient background of moral insight. The middle phase, which forms the driving power of the religion, is primarily an exhibition in life of moral intuition, with a sufficiency of intellectual insight to give an articulate expression of singular beauty. The three phases are bound together as intellectual discovery,—then exemplification,—finally metaphysical interpretation. The discovery and the exemplification are historically independent.

The first phase is constituted by Plato's publication of his final conviction, towards the end of his life,⁷ that the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency. This doctrine should be looked upon as one of the greatest intellectual discoveries in the history of religion. It is plainly enunciated by Plato, though he failed to coördinate it systematically with the rest of his metaphysical theory. Indeed, Plato always failed in his attempts at systematization, and always succeeded in displaying depth of metaphysical intuition—the greatest metaphysician, the poorest systematic thinker. The alternative doctrine, prevalent then and now, sees either in the many gods or in the one God, the final coercive forces wielding the thunder. By a metaphysical sublimation of this doctrine of God as the supreme agency of compulsion, he is transformed into the one supreme reality, omnipotently disposing a wholly derivative world. Plato wavered inconsistently between these

⁷ Cf. *The Sophist* and the *Timæus*.

⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

diverse conceptions. But he does finally enunciate without qualification the doctrine of the divine persuasion, by reason of which ideals are effective in the world and forms of order evolve.

The second phase is the supreme moment in religious history, according to the Christian religion. The essence of Christianity is the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world. The record is fragmentary, inconsistent, and uncertain. It is not necessary for me to express any opinion as to the proper reconstruction of the most likely tale of historic fact. Such a procedure would be useless, without value, and entirely out of place in this book. But there can be no doubt as to what elements in the record have evoked a response from all that is best in human nature. The Mother, the Child, and the bare manger: the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love, and sympathy: the suffering, the agony, the tender words as life ebbed, the final despair: and the whole with the authority of supreme victory.

I need not elaborate. Can there be any doubt that the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act, of that which Plato divined in theory?

The third phase is again intellectual. It is the first period in the formation of Christian theology by the schools of thought mainly associated with Alexandria and Antioch. The originality and value of their contribution to the thought of the world has been greatly underestimated. This is partly their own fault. For they persisted in declaring that they were only stating the faith once delivered to the saints; whereas in fact they were groping after the solution of a fundamental metaphysical problem, although presented to them in a highly special form.

These Christian theologians have the distinction of being the only thinkers who in a fundamental metaphysical doctrine have improved upon Plato. It is true that this period of Christian theology was Platonic. But it is also true that Plato is the originator of the heresies and of the feeblest side of Christian Theology. When Plato is faced with the problem of expressing the relationship of God to the World, and of the relation to the World of those Ideas which it is in God's nature to contemplate, Plato's answer is invariably framed in terms of mere dramatic imitation. When Plato turns to the

World, after considering God as giving life and motion to the ideas by the inclusion of them in the divine nature, he can find only second-rate substitutes and never the originals. For Plato there is a derivative second-rate God of the World, who is a mere Icon, that is to say an image. Also when he looks for the ideas, he can only find, in the World, imitations. Thus the World, for Plato, includes only the image of God, and imitations of his ideas, and never God and his ideas.

Plato has definite reasons for this gap between the transient world and the eternal nature of God. He is avoiding difficulties, although he only achieves the feeblest of solutions. What metaphysics requires is a solution exhibiting the plurality of individuals as consistent with the unity of the Universe, and a solution which exhibits the World as requiring its union with God, and God as requiring his union with the World. Sound doctrine also requires an understanding how the Ideals in God's nature, by reason of their status in his nature, are thereby persuasive elements in the creative advance. Plato grounded these derivations from God upon his will; whereas metaphysics requires that the relationships of God to the World should lie beyond the accidents of will, and that they be founded upon the necessities of the nature of God and the nature of the World.

These problems came before the Christian theologians in highly special forms. They had to consider the nature of God. On this topic, there can be no doubt that the Arian solution, involving a derivative Image, is orthodox Platonism, though it be heterodox Christianity. The accepted solution of a multiplicity in the nature of God, each component being unqualifiedly Divine, involves a doctrine of mutual immanence in the divine nature. I am not in any way venturing upon a decision upon the correctness of the original assumption of this multiplicity. The point is the recourse to a doctrine of mutual immanence.

Again, the theologians had also to construct a doctrine of the person of Christ. And again they rejected the doctrine of an association of the human individual with a divine individual, involving responsive imitations in the human person. They decided for the direct immanence of God in the one person of Christ. They also decided for some sort of direct immanence of God in the World

generally. This was their doctrine of the third person of the Trinity. I am not making any judgment about the details of their theology, for example, about the Trinitarian doctrine. My point is that in the place of Plato's solution of secondary images and imitations, they demanded a direct doctrine of immanence. It is in this respect that they made a metaphysical discovery. They pointed out the way in which Platonic metaphysics should develop, if it was to give a rational account of the rôle of the persuasive agency of God.

Unfortunately, the theologians never made this advance into general metaphysics. The reason for this check was another unfortunate presupposition. The nature of God was exempted from all the metaphysical categories which applied to the individual things in this temporal world. The concept of him was a sublimation from its barbaric origin. He stood in the same relation to the whole World as early Egyptian or Mesopotamian kings stood to their subject populations. Also the moral characters were very analogous. In the final metaphysical sublimation, he became the one absolute, omnipotent, omniscient source of all being, for his own existence requiring no relations to anything beyond himself. He was internally complete. Such a conception fitted on very well to the Platonic doctrine of subordinate derivations. The final insistence, after much wavering, on the immanence of God was therefore all the more a fine effort of metaphysical imagination on the part of the theologians of the early Christian ages. But their general concept of the Deity stopped all further generalization. They made no effort to conceive the World in terms of the metaphysical categories by means of which they interpreted God, and they made no effort to conceive God in terms of the metaphysical categories which they applied to the World. For them, God was eminently real, and the World was derivatively real. God was necessary to the World, but the World was not necessary to God. There was a gulf between them.

The worst of a gulf is, that it is very difficult to know what is happening on the further side of it. This has been the fate of the God of traditional theology. It is only by drawing the long bow of mysticism that evidences for his existence can be collected from our temporal World. Also the worst of unqualified omnipotence is that it is accompanied by responsibility for every detail of every happening. This whole topic is discussed by Hume in his famous Dialogues.

Session 2

GOD WORKS THROUGH PERSUASION

Session Two is an introduction to Whitehead's doctrine of God and to the basic concept that "God works through persuasion, not coercion." The session begins with the discussion of an art form through which the aesthetic dimension of Whitehead's doctrine can be experienced. Reflections on the art form may lead to the broader question of how one experiences persuasion.

The lecture, a general introduction to the Whiteheadian doctrine of God, also has brief biographical material on Whitehead and tries to lay a general philosophical foundation by defining metaphysics, describing the process view of the nature of reality, and of how God and the world are related.

The study paper is an excerpt from Daniel Day Williams', The Spirit and the Forms of Love, and is intended to provide further material on the topics of sessions one and two. Ample time should be allowed for discussion of the lecture and the paper.

Art Form and Discussion on Beauty and Persuasion

Present a picture, either a painting or a slide (perhaps a series of slides), which has an attractive form which draws the eye, and beauty which is pleasing. Discuss the picture: how it persuades one to look at it and draws the eye to various parts of it; how beauty is enhanced by contrast. If the subject of the picture has persuasive religious meaning, e.g. a madonna, that too can be discussed.

Or, a piece of music can be played, e.g., Bach's Pasacaglia or Toccata and Fugue in C. The same sort of discussion on form, contrast and persuasion can be held on the music. The point of the discussion and the question which can broaden it is: What draws you to itself through its innate persuasive power and beauty?

Lecture: "The Whiteheadian Doctrine of God"

Let us begin with an ancient reading about life and the light of reason, and about the persuasive power of grace and truth:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ...

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. ...And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.¹

This passage from John is the classic New Testament statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is a theological way of talking about the presence of God in the world. Whiteheadian theology is Johannine in tone and is profoundly incarnational in that God is seen as immanent in the world. We will talk more later about how God and the world are intimately interrelated.

Now I want to say something about Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead was an Englishman, the son of an Anglican clergyman. Born in the year our American Civil War began, 1861, he lived a long, full life, until 1947. Whitehead was a mathematician most of his life and gained fame in that field, collaborating with Bertrand Russell in writing the classic Principia Mathematica published in 1903.

¹John 1:1-5, 6-14, 16-18.

He also developed his own theory of relativity at the same time as Einstein was working on his theory. It was not until he retired from teaching mathematics in England, at the age of 60, that he moved to America and began to teach philosophy at Harvard. He wrote his major philosophical works after he retired. Religion in the Making was published in 1926, as was his major philosophical work, Process and Reality. Adventures of Ideas, from which you have read an excerpt, came out in 1933. Whitehead also wrote a book entitled Science and the Modern World, as well as other books which I will not mention. He arrived at his doctrine of God through his science. He did not begin with God as a part of his system of thought. In fact, he tried to avoid bringing God in as any sort of God of the gaps. He found, however, the need to posit God as that which gives form and order to existence (the Word, the Logos) and as the source and organ of newness, of novelty and of life.

Whitehead was a philosopher, not a theologian. As a philosopher he sought to present a vision of reality which includes everything. The word "metaphysics" was picked up and dusted off by Whitehead and used to refer to this kind of most general philosophical reflection, reflection about world-views and conceptual presuppositions concerning the nature of reality and how everything relates to every-

thing else. Everyone has metaphysical presuppositions in this sense, although they may lie unexamined and be taken for granted as "just the way things are." Even theologians who disparage philosophy have their metaphysical presuppositions about the nature of reality. Whiteheadian theologians are theologians who have examined their philosophical presuppositions and find that Whitehead's philosophy is the presently most adequate vision of reality within which to do their work of clarifying and communicating the Christian faith. So a distinction must be made between Whitehead's philosophy and a theology which is based upon this philosophy and uses it as a vehicle. In these lectures, however, I will not try to make that kind of technical distinction.

The man most responsible for introducing Whitehead's thought into theological circles is Charles Hartshorne, who taught for many years at the University of Chicago. Two well-known students of Hartshorne are John Cobb of the School of Theology at Claremont and Schubert Ogden of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. Daniel Day Williams, recently deceased, who taught at Union Seminary in New York and Norman Pittenger, currently teaching at Cambridge, England, are also widely known. Along with a growing number of Protestants, a few

Roman Catholic theologians are also beginning to use Whitehead.

The vision of reality which Whitehead develops is one in which nothing is isolated. Everything is organically interrelated. Whitehead referred to his own philosophy as "the philosophy of organism."² This means that God and the world are also organically interrelated. Not only can the world not exist apart from God, God cannot exist apart from the world. By "the world" we do not mean the planet earth, but the entire universe. All of reality, including the reality of God, is interrelated. And the nature of reality is that it is in process. Reality is dynamic, not static. That which is ultimately real is best described as events, happenings, rather than as a substance. Reality can never be pinned down to the category of being because it is always becoming. Reality is forever in what Whitehead calls "creative advance", in the process of becoming, and this includes God. One aspect of God is in process, is changing, becoming, growing. God is a participant in the creative advance, not an observer. God participates in the world; God participates in the evolving universe.

²Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. vi.

This does not mean that God and the world are identical. The doctrine that God and the world are identical is called pantheism. Whitehead is not a pantheist. Although God is immanent (i.e., within) in the world and organically intertwined with the world, the reality of God still transcends the world. Transcendence means not being caught within or completely conditioned by an environment.

Whitehead sought to avoid what he considered to be the two extremes in the doctrine of God. "The extremes," he wrote, "are the doctrine of God as the impersonal order of the universe, and the doctrine of God as the one person creating the universe."³ To conceive of God as an ultimate philosophical principle is unsatisfactory, and for Whitehead the other extreme of conceiving God in the form of an oriental despot or divine Caesar was idolatrous. In fact, he felt that Christianity had pretty well combined the worst features of both extremes into a conception of God as a coercive monarch who alone has reality, who commanded the world into existence and imposes his will upon it. This, wrote Whitehead, "is the fallacy which has infused tragedy into the histories of Christianity and Mahometanism."⁴

³Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: World, 1960), p. 144.

⁴Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 519

The church did not adhere to the conception of God shown in its own origin. In a famous passage in Process and Reality, Whitehead wrote:

There is...in the Galilean origin of Christianity yet another suggestion...It does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals. ...⁵

As Charles Hartshorne has remarked, "God is no cosmic policeman or magistrate; God is the cosmic lover."⁶ This is a central theme of Whiteheadian theology: God works through persuasion, not coercion. As we read in the section from Adventures of Ideas, it was Plato who first published the idea that the divine element in the world is to be understood as the power of persuasion rather than compulsion, and this idea was then exemplified, acted out, incarnated, in the life of Jesus. This is the "revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world"⁷ which is the essence of Christianity. Whitehead points out that reverence for the power of persuasion is the foundation of

⁵Ibid, p. 520

⁶Opinion expressed by Charles Hartshorne during a discussion at The School of Theology at Claremont, April 15, 1974.

⁷Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 167

the respect of people for other people upon which civilization itself is built. Without this, without persuasion, there would be no liberty of thought and action and therefore no upward adventure of life.⁸ A society which has lost the innate persuasive power of its ideals and must resort to force to maintain itself has already degenerated and is disintegrating.

How, then, are God and the world related and how does God do the work of persuasion? This is the basic question with which we are dealing in this course, and we will deal with it again and again on different levels and from various perspectives. This time we will talk about it in a general way. Later we will analyze it in more detail. A few minutes ago we said that in Whitehead's vision of reality everything is interrelated and the nature of reality can best be described as events or happenings. Whitehead calls these events, these instances of reality, "occasions," or "actual occasions." Ultimately, everything is made up of actual occasions, of tiny events which happen in a fraction of a second and then become a part of the past, the immediate past which is the ground out of which the next split-second generation of actual entities arises. In the jargon of process philosophy an entity is an oc-

⁸Ibid, p. 86

casion. An "actual entity" and an "actual occasion" are the same thing. They are the tiny events which are the ultimate units of reality and out of which the universe is made. The fabric of the universe is woven from becoming occasions which are present for but an instant and then perish. But in their perishing they hand on the data of existence to the next generation of becoming occasions, so the past is carried on in the present. Thus the fabric of existence is maintained and the world does not fall apart.

We will go into this more deeply in the next lecture. The crucial point now is to grasp a vision of reality which is radically dynamic and in which we see the ultimate level of anything and everything as popping with activity, bursting with energy. The nature of reality is more like a pan of popcorn popping than it is like a raw piece of meat just lying there. What is really real, out of which arise the phenomena which we see and touch and smell and hear, the things-in-themselves, are actual occasions, events which are becoming. There is no inert substance. Material things which appear to be inert are actually teeming with activity.

God and the world relate on the level of actual occasions, on the level of ultimate reality. We must understand that this is a metaphysical statement, not a scientific fact. Whitehead's vision of reality is metaphysical;

it is philosophical. It undergrids and dovetails with modern science in the sense that it does not conflict with the findings of science and even provides a philosophical basis for quantum physics and relativity physics. But this philosophical vision cannot be scientifically proven. It is presented as a statement of rational faith and its adequacy is upheld or denied according to its ability to illuminate both scientific facts and our religious experience. Other visions of reality may have the power to illumine our scientific knowledge and world-view, or may explain our religious experience, but not both at the same time.

God is involved with each actual occasion before it happens; so Whitehead talks about God having two aspects, or natures, or poles: the primordial nature and the consequent nature. Since God and the world are interrelated, it is a two-way street. God is present to the occasion prior to and during the happening--that's the primordial aspect--and after the occasion happens, it is present to God and makes a difference to God--that's the consequent aspect. Each event has its consequence for God and for subsequent events.

Now every actual occasion is something definite, it is this rather than that, just as you are something definite. You are here rather than there, wherever there

might be. There are lots of possibilities for your being somewhere else. The possibilities of "theres" is infinite, but there is only one "here," and here you are. That's definite, and it is also a limitation. You can't be everywhere at the same time. You are limited to being in only one "here" at a time. And the fact that you are here rather than in some other possible there has to do with some purpose, some aim, some goal, some value, which was presented to you as a possibility and you decided to fulfill.

This is somewhat the way God is related to a becoming occasion. The primordial aspect of God has to do with possibilities and their limitations, and with purpose. In order for anything to exist, it has to exist as a particular kind of thing and not something else, this rather than that, here rather than there. Only a certain number of possibilities can be fulfilled, or actualized, in any one entity at one time. Some possibilities are mutually exclusive. You can't be here and lying on the beach at the same time. But the number of possibilities is infinite. This infinity of possibilities is God's primordial nature. It is the eternal unchanging aspect of God. God is the inexhaustible source of potentiality, some of which has been actualized in the past, some of which may never be actualized and some of which will enter into the actual world when conditions are ripe for its appearance as something

new.

This infinity of possibilities is not just floating around loose in outer space or gathering dust in some heavenly warehouse. The possibilities are not loose and random; they are arranged in a structure of possibility.⁹ Most possibilities have no relevance for a particular becoming occasion, and of those which might be actualized, some possibilities are more relevant than others. Whitehead says the possibilities are structured by being "graded in relevance," i.e., there is a gradation of relevance by which God provides order among the possibilities. This is why there is order among the popping actual occasions. Each becoming occasion is presented with a gradation, a continuum, a selection, of possibilities which are relevant and could be actualized. This is the Whiteheadian way of talking about the Logos, the divine principle of order which keeps the universe from falling apart. Whitehead calls it the principle of limitation. It is only by limiting possibilities that anything comes into existence at all. Unlimited possibility cannot be actualized and technically equals nothing. For an occasion to happen, it must become definite, and it becomes definite by defining itself, and

⁹Bernard Lee, The Becoming of the Church (New York: Paulist Press, 1974) p. 95.

it defines itself by actualizing some of its possibilities and not others. It has to make a decision like you had to decide to be here instead of somewhere else. And an actual occasion decides what it will become, how it will limit and thus define itself, according to its purpose or aim.

We said a minute ago that the primordial aspect of God has to do with possibilities and their limitation, and with purpose. God has a primordial aim, an eternal purpose. In one place Whitehead puts it this way: "The purpose of God is the attainment of value in the temporal world."¹⁰ Just to exist is a value in itself. The becoming of an occasion actualizes some possibilities and this is of value. Just to be is good. You might say God loves that little occasion just because it is. But God not only has a general purpose; there is a particular purpose for each actual occasion. God's primordial aim becomes focused for each becoming occasion as the "initial aim" for that happening. God's initial aim for that occasion is that it achieve the highest value, the deepest intensity, the richest harmony, the best satisfaction that it is possible for that occasion to have, given the limitations within which it comes to be. It is God's initial aim which is the starter of the happen-

¹⁰Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 97

ing, which kicks off the occasion's becoming.

But God's purpose is persuasive, not dictatorial. Each actual occasion has its own aim, too, which Whitehead calls its "subjective aim," and it actualizes the possibilities given to it with freedom to use some and leave out others, within its over-all limits. These limits are set within the framework of that occasion's immediate past. The ground out of which the new occasion arises is the environment already set by previous occasions and the decisions which they made. So there is a prior given world within which both God and the new occasion must function. God's aim for a particular occasion is always the best possible within the given situation. So God is constantly luring the actual occasions of the world to find satisfaction in the highest ideals possible, rather than settling for lesser satisfactions.

It is not that the actual occasions are conscious, you understand, even though we are using language derived from human experience to talk about them. Consciousness is a very highly developed and complex happening. The occasions which happen in your brain which you call "I," or "myself," attain consciousness part of the time and make conscious decisions and choices. But every occasion has some trace of "mentality," and we will talk about that more later.

So in Whiteheadian theology the primordial nature of God is the structure of possibility which is eternal and infinite and which provides the relevant possibilities and initial aim for each becoming occasion. Without God there would be no possibilities and thus no world, so God is the creator in this sense. But, Whitehead says, God is not the Creator in the sense that he commanded or commands the world into existence out of nothing: "...he is not before all creation, but with all creation."¹¹ This means that the world has its own reality, apart from God, that the world in one sense transcends God, just as God has reality apart from the world and transcends the world. This also means that as the world needs God in order to exist, God needs the world in order to exist. This is what Whitehead calls the consequent nature of God.

This may seem to you to be the strangest part of Whitehead's doctrine of God, but at the same time it turns out to be the part which is the most biblical. The primordial aspect of God's nature sounds familiar to us: it is eternal and unchanging; it has to do with creation and purpose, with how God affects the world. But the consequent aspect of God's nature has to do with how the world affects

¹¹Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 521

God, the consequences of actual occasions. Whiteheadian theology holds that what happens makes a difference to God. That's an understatement, because what happens in the world is literally taken into the being, into the reality, of God. When an actual occasion perishes, after its split-second life, it not only becomes a part of the past, it also becomes a part of the consequent nature of God. It achieves what Whitehead calls "objective immortality," and becomes a part of the divine life. The value which that occasion actualized is not lost when it perishes; it is retained forever in the ongoing life of God. So, the outcome, the consequences of all the actual occasions of the world is the creating of God. God is a participant in the creative advance of the world. In fact, God's conscious consequent nature is growing as a result of the creativity which keeps actualizing possibilities through actual occasions.

Whitehead says God feels the happenings in the world. The primordial nature has to do with concepts, but the consequent nature has to do with physical feelings: "The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God's physical feelings upon his primordial concepts."¹² So God literally suffers with us and

¹²Ibid, p. 524

takes our sin into himself. And the more fully we fulfill the initial aim, the ideal purpose given, the more we enrich not only our own lives, but also the divine life.

It is in God's consequent nature that all of the individual and thus partial happenings of the world are adjusted into a unity. It is here that evil is overcome with good. Evil is not conquered by being abolished, but by being overcome with good in the wholeness, the totality, the final harmony of God's consequent and primordial natures. This is the kingdom of God. Whitehead writes:

The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also the judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage.¹³

Again he writes:

"...God's role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization. He does not create the world, he saves it: or more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."¹⁴

Here Whitehead is saying that the images by which we can best conceive this growing nature of God are those

¹³Ibid, p. 525

¹⁴Ibid, p. 526

of tender care that nothing be lost and that of an infinite patience which is leading us. In another place he says God "...is the binding element in the world. The consciousness which is individual in us, in universal in him: the love which is partial in us is all-embracing in him."¹⁵

Perhaps now you are beginning to have a feel for Whitehead's vision of reality and can understand why his philosophy is appealing to Christian theologians. Although it rejects the image of God as the all-powerful Creator monarch, it is very compatible with the image of God revealed in the life of Jesus, the loving God who knows when a sparrow falls and the number of hairs on your head. In Whitehead's philosophy, the ultimate category is not ethics or morals as it was for Kant; the ultimate category is aesthetic. Finally, it is not the power of law or will, the promise of reward or the threat of punishment, or even the question of what one ought to do, which moves us. It is the power of what Whitehead calls "the strength of Beauty" which persuades the world toward fulfillment. Whitehead's "strength of Beauty" is what John calls "grace and truth."

Every event on its finer side introduces God into the world. ...The power by which God sustains the

¹⁵Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 152

world is the power of himself as the ideal. He adds himself to the actual ground from which every creative act takes its rise. The world lives by its incarnation of God in itself.¹⁶

We can join with Altizer in saying, "God is dead." The old God of coercive power who lived upstairs and who was a despot, oppressing people for being human, is dead and gone. "The king is dead." Long live the kingly poet. "God the king is dead." Long live God the companion. As Whitehead wrote:

The depths of his existence lie beyond the vulgarities of praise or of power. He gives to suffering its swift insight into values which can issue from it. He is the ideal companion who transmutes what has been lost into a living fact within his own nature. He is the mirror which discloses to every creature its own greatness.¹⁷

"And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace."¹⁸

Study Paper by Williams on Process Theology

Excerpt from The Spirit and the Forms of Love, by Daniel Day Williams (pp. 106-110).¹⁹ This is Williams' summary of Whitehead's doctrine of God, and a word about process theology.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 149

¹⁷Ibid, p. 148

¹⁸John 1:16

¹⁹Daniel Day Williams, The Sprit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968)

In more recent years under the stimulus of Whitehead's thought and the constructive work of Charles Hartshorne, certain theologians have been developing 'process theology' as a systematic theological outlook. Norman Pittenger is the first theologian to work out a Christology incorporating the process view of God and man in his *The Word Incarnate*. Schubert Ogden and John Cobb, Jr., as well as the present writer, have committed their theological attention to the interpretation of the new metaphysic for Christian faith.⁽⁴⁵⁾ For these theologians, no philosophy is sufficient for Christian faith. Theology interprets the life of faith which needs philosophical structure for its intelligibility, but Christian faith is existential commitment and participation in the church which is a community of historical experience having its origin and centre in the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ.

The relation between philosophy and theology is a perennial problem for Christian thought, and the debate about methodology never ends. In the last analysis the test of a method is whether it illuminates concrete problems in life. The present book is an attempt to think theologically about the meanings of love with the resources contributed by process thought. The justification for such a method would be that it commends itself by making some sense out of the meaning of the love of God and the loves of men. Process thinkers do not claim to 'have all the answers'. One of our cardinal tenets is the tentativeness of all structures of interpretation. We are trying to grasp the meaning of love in the Christian faith in responsible relationship to the scripture, to the classical tradition, and to a contemporary scientific and rational understanding of our existence.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Process philosophy opens up for Christian theology a way of

44. William Temple, *Nature, Man, and God* (London: Macmillan, 1949).

45. I have given a brief account of process theology in *What Present Day Theologians are Thinking*, second revised edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Cf. Schubert Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961; London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1962); *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); John Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965); W. Norman Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959; London: James Nisbet & Co.). Cf. Dr. Pittenger's article 'A Contemporary Trend in North American Theology: Process Thought and Christian Faith', *Religion in Life*, Vol. 34, 1964-5, pp. 500-510.

46. I have given an outline of a theological method of this type in 'Truth in the Theological Perspective', *Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, Oct. 1948.

conceiving the being of God in historical-temporal terms. What it proposes is akin to the existentialist search for radical freedom for man, and the acceptance of the risks of being; but process philosophy is closer than existentialism to the classical philosophies in its search for an intelligible metaphysics. It seeks the *logos* of being. Process theologians believe that we can recapture aspects of the biblical message which have been obscured throughout the history of the tradition. The biblical God acts in a history where men have freedom which they can misuse. He is at work in time, and it is just this which the theological tradition, conditioned by neo-platonic metaphysics, has never been able to encompass.

In the next chapter we shall examine the specific ideas of process philosophy with respect to the nature of love. Here I introduce that exploration with a brief characterization of the metaphysical position especially as it is stated by Alfred North Whitehead; Whitehead's is the seminal mind which provided the main structure of thought which is process philosophy.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Whitehead has a close affinity to the classical metaphysical tradition. He sees the structure of being as the eternal order in the mind of God, but he wants to conceive reality including God himself as exhibiting a real history of concrete happenings.

Whitehead the philosopher used the instrument of metaphysical analysis for a critique of traditional theology. His most telling statement against the tradition is that 'the Church gave God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ He held that the monarchical element in the Semitic concept of deity had been joined to the Unmoved Mover theme in Aristotle and as the neo-platonists developed it. The metaphysical result was the God who does not suffer, who is unaffected by what happens in time, the God of absolute predestination and unfreedom. Whitehead believed that this doctrine had confused the mind of the church about the nature of the love disclosed in Jesus. Whitehead saw an ultimate ethical contrast between brute force or coercion and persuasive love. The Gospel presents the figure of the Christ as the expression of a non-

47. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 520. Cf. his *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926). The best general account of Whitehead's philosophy is Victor Lowe, *Understanding Whitehead* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962). For analysis of Whitehead's doctrine of God see the chapter by Charles Hartshorne in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. by Paul Schilpp (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1941); William Christian, *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

48. *Process and Reality*, p. 520. Cf. Daniel D. Williams, 'Deity, Monarchy, and Metaphysics; Whitehead's Critique of the Theological Tradition' in *The Relevance of Whitehead*, ed. by Ivor Leclerc (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

coercive love which draws the world in its freedom toward a finer community of being.⁽⁴⁹⁾ As Whitehead envisions the Christian message, Christ taught, lived, and died with the authority of a supreme ideal. His words were not metaphysical reflections, but the most direct and intuitive communication of which language is capable. Thus Christianity has been a religion seeking a metaphysic in contrast to Buddhism, which is a metaphysic generating a religion.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Whitehead therefore is not substituting philosophy for religion and faith. He regards philosophy as a never finished essay in fathoming the intelligibility of things, and it is always mistaken when it claims completeness for its conclusions. Philosophy is an instrument of vision. It should be the guide of life, not merely a technical exercise in the analysis of logical problems, but a bold attempt to grasp the structures of reality within the limits of human knowledge and frailty.

What Whitehead thus provides for us in the search for the meaning of love is a perspective on the world which opens new possibilities for conceiving the divine love and human loves. He articulates a world view which combines the classic search for being with the radical historical and temporal consciousness of the twentieth century. We can say that Whitehead sees his interpretation of the doctrine of God's being within the pattern of St. Augustine's 'faith seeking understanding', provided by faith we do not understand the acceptance of dogma; but the religious intuition born out of the impact of Jesus upon the world.

We can here indicate the main outline of Whitehead's doctrine of God as a basis for reconsidering the meaning of love.

There are two aspects of the divine nature. The first Whitehead calls the primordial nature of God. This is the ordered realm of abstract structure which embraces all the patterns of the possible meanings and values relevant to existence. Whitehead holds that this side of God's being does not change. It is present in him in one perfect, timeless vision. It is God as the eternal orderer of the world. This aspect of God's nature has all the attributes which the tradition ascribed to him. It is eternal, it cannot be acted upon, it cannot suffer. It simply is, because if there is a meaningful world of time and process, then there must be an order which makes it a world and which sets the boundaries of how things can be related to one another.

God's primordial nature is the structure of possibilities; his

49. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933; Cambridge University Press), chap. X.

50. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 50.

concrete nature is his participation with his creatures in the society of being. Whitehead calls this God's consequent nature. God's actuality involves concrete process. God shares with the creatures the power of his being, allowing them a measure of freedom and spontaneity so that God's temporal interaction with the creatures is a real history of inter-communication and action. What happens in this world makes a difference to God. He responds concretely to every new event by taking it as a datum into a new phase of his own life and adjusting it within the harmony of his vision. What remains fixed for God is the absolute integrity of his aim which looks toward fullness of life for the whole creation. To move the world toward this fulfilment, God shares in the concreteness of events. We avoid here one of the curious consequences of the Augustinian ontology which is that the world can add nothing to God. How can you add anything to absolute perfection? But in Whitehead's doctrine every achievement of good, of value, of meaning in the world increases the richness of God's being. God is not the world process. God is the eternal structure and power which makes a world possible and which participates in each moment of the world's becoming, for the world is nothing without him. As concrete life God is conscious, personal being.

Metaphysical outlooks are not provable as mathematical theorems. They are visions of the world which are to be judged, as Whitehead says, by their comprehensiveness and their adequacy to illuminate our actual experience.

There are three important consequences of this process metaphysics. First, it makes freedom and history intelligible as real aspects of being. In the classical metaphysics all temporal things are something less than real, because in being-itself all time and process are overcome. In the process view the spontaneity, originality and freedom of which we have some fragmentary experience is a clue to the nature of being. God's function in the world is not to make time disappear, or to make the future as certain as the past and the present. It is to give an ordered pattern to the creative life of the world and to bring new possibilities into existence in a real future. Those who are seeking for the 'secular' meaning of the Gospel could well turn to Whitehead's doctrine of the secular functions of God.⁽⁵¹⁾ God holds the world together by offering his eternal structure of value to every particular experience so that everything happens in significant relation to the world order and the community of beings. But God's function as cosmic orderer does not destroy the freedom of the creatures within the order.

51. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 315.

The second major point in the process doctrine is that it deals with the significance of evil in a manner different from the tradition. Process metaphysics does not explain evil away. It is under no necessity of doing so because it does not make God the sole cause of every happening. He exercises his creativity in a real world which has elements of spontaneity, of chance, and, at the higher levels, of moral freedom within it. Metaphysics does not explain why the world is this way; but it can describe a cosmic society of freedom which involves tangled cross histories. Life histories interfere with one another, as when a virus inhabits an animal body and causes disease. Process doctrines can go the whole way with existentialism in recognizing that man in his freedom may plunge into self-worship, or self-destruction; but this is because the real world has this risk within it, not because God wills that any creature should lose the meaning of life or decrees that any person should lose his possibility of knowing the good and doing it.

The third consequence of the process doctrine is a new analysis of the meaning of love, both the love of God and the human loves. This is our central concern, and we shall give the next chapter to the philosophical aspect of this analysis.

Session 3

REALITY IS EVENTS; EVENTS RELATE THROUGH FEELING

This session is probably the most difficult one in the course because of the complexity of the topic and the necessity of introducing numerous new terms. It is also the most important in that grasping the notion of the becoming of an actual occasion is fundamental to understanding Whitehead's metaphysical system. How God and the world relate is based on how actual occasions come into being and relate to one another.

The session has two parts, a lecture and a game. The lecture presupposes the use of a chalk board or some other method of making diagrams. It might be useful to also write new terms on the board so they can be seen as well as heard. Hopefully the terms are contextually defined as they are introduced, but they will not be retained by hearing them in one lecture. The glossary in the appendix might be reproduced and distributed. The lecture is a condensation, so ample time should be allotted for it and the discussion following.

The game is an attempt to get inside of a becoming occasion by acting it out. It is necessarily a caricature and should not be taken too seriously, but can be a learn-

ing experience. It is placed here to enable the participants to have some action and to play with the concepts introduced by a heavy lecture. The leader will have to carefully prepare for the game if it is to be effective.

Lecture: "The Private and Public Lives of An Actual Occasion"

Again let us begin with an ancient poem, one from the Old Testament:

Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
 whose hope is in the LORD his God,
 who made heaven and earth,
 the sea and all that is in them;
 who keeps faith for ever;
 who executes justice for the oppressed;
 who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;
 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
 The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
 the LORD loves the righteous.
 The LORD watches over the sojourners,
 he upholds the widow and the fatherless;
 but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The LORD will reign for ever,
 thy God, O Zion, to all generations.
 Praise the LORD!¹

The writer of Psalm 146 doesn't have an image of God as sitting by himself in a corner. He sees God as active within the world. Notice how God is the subject of active verbs: God executes justice, gives food, sets free, opens eyes, lifts up, loves, watches over, upholds, brings to ruin. God's existence is known through his activity. God's being is expressed by effective power.

¹Psalm 146:5-10

In process philosophy, the ability to have an effect on something else is the definition of being. Being is power. In the last lecture we talked some about actual occasions as the ultimate units of reality. An actual occasion has reality because it has an effect; its existence causes consequences and it must be taken account of. Actual occasions are bundles of power.

It is difficult to talk about actual occasions because you can't form an adequate mental image of them. How can you picture an event? How do you draw a diagram of an occasion? The way Whitehead tries to point to what actual occasions are and do is with the word "feeling." The power or energy of the tiny event is the power of feeling. He says an actual occasion is a synthesis of feelings, a pulling together into a new unity of many strands of feelings. If it were possible to dissect an actual occasion, what you would find when you cut it open would be an integration of feelings. So the character of reality is feeling. Underneath both physical and mental phenomena are not tiny objects or thoughts, but feelings. Feeling is more fundamental, more basic to reality than either physical objects or thoughts. And there are no stray feelings. Feelings always belong to some actual occasion. Actual occasions are the basic entities of reality and they are composed of feelings. Every feeling has a home in some actual entity.

There are no homeless feelings.

In everyday life we use the word "feeling" in different ways, but the ways are related to one another as different dimensions of the meaning.² We say, "You hurt my feelings," meaning my emotions, my subjective state. And we say, "I feel the table," which points to a subject-object relationship, an interaction between two things. And we say, "I feel that this is the way it ought to be. How do you feel about it?" which means a kind of sensing just short of belief. We use the word in different ways, and when Whitehead uses it, it has these overtones, but basically he uses the word "feeling" to describe a characteristic which is transmitted from one entity to another. In physics the transmission of energy from one place to another is called a "vector." The vector relationship is diagramed by using an arrow showing the direction of the flow:



So Whitehead uses this term, "vector," to point to the flow of feeling from one actual occasion to another. An actual occasion is composed of feelings and after the process of

²Taken from a lecture by John Cobb at The School of Theology at Claremont, October 28, 1974.

becoming is completed, it perishes, but in its perishing its feelings flow out to become part of the next becoming occasion. The perishing occasion literally gives itself to the next generation.

Every diagram distorts what it is trying to illustrate as much as it explains it, and you can't really picture an actual occasion, but I'll try to diagram this aspect of it. Let's point to the idea that an actual occasion is a bundle of feelings by using a kind of asterisk to denote it:



Now in order to tell the difference between an actual occasion which has completed the process of becoming and is in the past, from one which is going through the process of becoming in the present, I'll put a circle around the center, the crux, of the completed occasion.



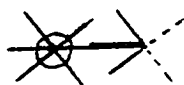
The completed occasion becomes part of the ground, the immediate past, which gives rise to the next becoming occasions, and this is accomplished by the vector relationship:



So the new becoming occasion has the opportunity of

feeling the feeling flowing from the antecedent occasion.

If the feeling being transmitted is one which the new occasion wants to include in its life, if the feeling is compatible with the new occasion's purpose for becoming, compatible with its subjective aim, then that feeling is accepted and becomes part of the subjective experience of the new occasion:



So that which was at first an object becomes a part of a new subject. That which was at first data from the outside is incorporated into the new occasion and becomes a part of what constitutes it. That which was public, and was, as it were, outside the house in the street, comes in the door and becomes part of the private life of the new occasion. The feeling that came knocking on the door becomes adopted into the new home and is incorporated into the life of that new occasion.

What happens to the feeling while it is part of the private life of the new occasion? Well, that depends on the subjective aim of that new occasion. The feeling enters into the process through which the occasion becomes what it is. And each occasion is unique. Each occasion is an individual which receives each feeling in its own way, places a value on it and then integrates it with other feel-

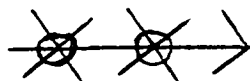
ings in an overall synthesis.

First, the feeling will be felt according to the way the new occasion feels about it. The new occasion may not feel the feeling in the same way the old occasion did. For instance, I may receive from you a feeling of joy and so I feel joyful. But the way I feel that feeling of joy might be tinged with guilt for me because I have a vague feeling that I don't have time to be joyful. Or you and I might hear the same music and receive that physical feeling in entirely different ways, one enjoying it and the other hating it according to individual tastes and experiences. The point is that the feeling is received according to what Whitehead calls its "subjective form" in the new occasion. Each feeling has its subjective form, the form of how it is experienced by the occasion. And each occasion's subjective form for that feeling is unique.

Then the feeling is valued up or down according to the occasion's purpose or subjective aim. This means that the feeling plays a more important or a less important role in the process of the synthesizing of the many feelings the occasion has received into one complex feeling. If the feeling is valued up, it may become more intense, a deeper feeling, and play a larger role. If it is valued down, it may become trivial and weak, and as it is passed on to other occasions, eventually even disappear.

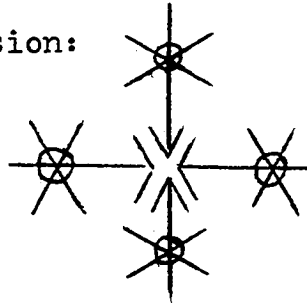
After it is valued up or down, the feeling is integrated and reintegrated with other feelings until there is one complex feeling which satisfies the occasion's purpose.

So the private life of an actual occasion has three main phases: the initial phase of receiving the data from the occasions in its immediate past, its ground; the middle phase of synthesizing the data, of pulling itself together, and the final phase of reaching what Whitehead calls its "satisfaction." It then perishes, giving its unique synthesis of feeling to the next becoming occasion through the vector relationship; and thus, it, too, becomes a public object and begins its public life. It becomes an object for the next subject:

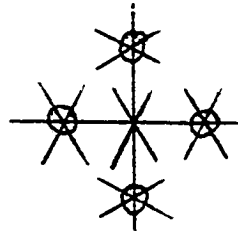


Perhaps, in our tracing the life history of one feeling, it has not been clear that each becoming occasion is made up of many feelings. The more complex the occasion is, the more feelings it inherits from the many, many prior occasions which make up its ground, its "actual world." Perhaps our asterisk diagram can suggest how one new occasion is constituted by the coming together of many feelings from antecedent occasions. This is, of course, only suggestive of how one comes out of many and is highly oversimplified. The perishing occasions are transmitting their

feelings in all directions at once. We are limited to two dimensions in our illustration and I'm drawing only one vector for each occasion:



In its becoming the new occasion constitutes itself by receiving feelings from many occasions:



Reality is events and events relate through feeling.

Because the word "feeling" is somewhat ambiguous, Whitehead coined a new word to point to the technical meaning of feeling, the word "prehension," (derived from "apprehension"). A prehension, he writes, "involves emotion, and purpose, and valuation, and causation. In fact, any characteristic of an actual entity is reproduced in a prehension. It might have been a complete actuality; but by reason of a certain incomplete partiality, a prehension is only a subordinate element in an actual entity."³ He goes on to say that the prehension needs the actual occasion in order to have a subjective form, because the subjective

³Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 28, 29.

form is determined by the subjective aim of the occasion. In other words, in order for a prehension, a feeling, to exist, it must be felt in some particular way (in some subjective form). It can't exist in general, and the particular way in which it is felt and thus defined, depends upon the purpose of the actual occasion of which it is a part. That's why there can be no homeless feelings. Every prehension must be a part of some prehending subject, some actual entity. Everything must be somewhere; this is what Whitehead calls "the ontological principle." ("Ontology" is an old Greek word which means the study of being). If something is, says Whitehead, then it must be a part of something real, otherwise, there is no place for it to exist. That's his ontological principle. Whitehead is a very tidy thinker, you see; there is a place for everything and everything must be in its place.

This principle includes the possibilities, the conceptual ideas. We feel them, weprehend them, because they are conceptual feelings. Where do they live? Their home is the primordial nature of God. God is an actual entity and the concepts, the ideas, are a part of God. God is real and is the source of the concepts, the patterns, the forms which define how each actual occasion feels its feelings, and thus how the world is shaped.

There are basically two kinds of feelings or prehensions, physical feelings and conceptual feelings. God is the source of conceptual feelings and every actual occasion has the capacity to receive concepts, i.e., possibilities, from God. Every occasion has a "mental" receiver, as well as a physical receiver. Every actual occasion has a mental pole and a physical pole. This does not mean that everything has a mind or thinks or is conscious. Almost everything is not conscious. There is a gradation of actual entities with vast differences between those making up a rock and those of a human self, but there is no ontological difference, no difference in the kind of being they are. There is only one kind of being, one kind of reality.

Perhaps we can put it this way: every actual occasion has the same three phases of receiving data, pulling itself together and reaching the satisfaction of a new synthesis. The actual occasions which make up a rock have just a trace of mentality. Their mental poles have, let us say, just enough capacity to pick up one possibility by which to define the physical feeling which is coming in. They feel that incoming feeling rockily. The physical feeling comes vectoring in, the subjective aim of the occasion says, "O.K., now, the purpose of this occasion is to conform. The aim is to hand on exactly what has been receiv-

ed. That is all." Actually, there is more than one feeling being passed on; it's not just rockness. It might be a rockness grayly, or whatever. We are not suggesting that rocks think or that the occasions which make up rocks think. The point is the occasions in rocks are pretty dumb; they're not even alive. Occasions in inorganic objects like rocks are satisfied by conforming, so the same possibilities are actualized over and over again. That's called stability. Rocks are very stable. In nature there is a tendency to conform.

When you move up the continuum of actual occasions you reach a point somewhere when an occasion has enough "oomph" to not only feel the usual conformist possibilities, but also to feel a neighboring new possibility in the structure of possible conceptual feelings, and chooses the new possibility instead. Then something new is actualized and novelty enters the world. This, says Whitehead, is the origin of life. If the next occasion "likes" the new idea and "steals" it from its predecessor⁴ it is then passed on and may become established. Whitehead calls this stealing an idea from another actual occasion a "hybrid physical prehension." It's a hybrid, a cross between a conceptual

⁴Bernard Lee, Becoming of the Church (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), p. 72

feeling and a physical feeling.

Organic things, living things, are not as stable as inorganic things. They need a more specialized environment in order to maintain life. If the environment is right, the novelty can be maintained and enter into the stream of becoming occasions. If not, it was born at the wrong time or in the wrong place and perishes.

As one moves up the scale of life, the actual occasions become increasingly complex, handling more and more data and becoming increasingly more mental in their operation. The more mental an actual occasion is the more possibilities it can entertain and the greater the chance that novel possibilities will be actualized. As far as we know, apart from God, the human actual occasion, the self, is the most highly developed occasion, has the most mentality, and is situated in the most complex environment, the environment of the human brain.

It is the human occasion that Whitehead takes for his model. Rather than taking material objects like balls bouncing around, he takes the way human experience is shaped from one moment to the next, and generalizes this to other levels of occasions. From this model he gets the pattern of the flow of feelings, the idea of how emotional tone carries over from one occasion to the next and the

model for the subjectivity, the privacy and uniqueness, of each becoming occasion. But, in generalizing, we must remember that human occasions are super high grade.

Also, we have been talking about individual actual occasions and need to remind ourselves that, even though it is true that reality is made up of a plurality of individuals, they are still interrelated and come in groups. A group of actual occasions has togetherness because theyprehend or feel each other. Actual occasions always arise in these "touchy-feely" groups. Whitehead calls a group of actual occasions a "nexus." And if a nexus has some kind of social order, he calls it a "society." And what is it that makes a society a society? What gives social order to a group of actual occasions? It is a kind of common character, a "defining characteristic,"⁵ which all its members share. Members of a society have something in common. They are birds of a feather, so they flock together. As societies build up into larger and larger groups, like a box within a box within a box, etc., they form what Whitehead calls "enduring objects." A table or a chair is an enduring object in Whiteheadian language. The point is that a table is not an entity; it is a society of entities,

⁵Ibid, p. 137

a society of occasions. The actual occasions are the entities. A table is not the ultimate fact of our experience. It belongs to appearance, to phenomena, in the sense that what we see and touch and call the table is derived from what is actually real, which are the occasions which make up the table. The table is really there, but it is an enduring object. It is not an individual entity in Whiteheadian language. "The ultimate facts of immediate actual experience," writes Whitehead, "are actual entities, prehensions and nexūs."⁶

So the world of our experience is made up of societies within societies within societies of actual occasions. If you think of your own body, you know that your flesh and bones and brain can be broken down into cells and molecules, etc. You are an enduring object.

A few minutes ago we were talking about how actual occasions in rocks are simpler than in living organisms. That upward trend toward complexity continues so that animals are more complex than plants. Whitehead says plants are democracies and animals are monarchies in the sense that plants have no unifying center, but that animals are organisms which have developed a unifying center, a "dominant occasion." The animal organism became so complex that

⁶Ibid, p. 30

a super complex actual occasion arose as the organizing dominant occasion of the body. This dominant occasion is perceptive and makes decisions not only for itself but also for the organism as a whole. Whitehead explains in technical detail how the integration and reintegration of conceptual feelings reaches the point of complexity where it is possible for intelligence and then consciousness to arise.⁷ Biologists using a mechanistic theory of evolution have had a difficult time explaining the jump from inorganic matter to living things, and the jump from unconscious instincts to conscious awareness. Whitehead's theory provides a way to understand the appearance of life and consciousness within evolutionary development, since in his view mentality is present from the beginning, developing into life and "mind," and so it does not have to appear out of nowhere somewhere along the line.⁸

Actual occasions, then, are ontologically the same but have vast differences in complexity. They can be divided into four categories along a continuum of complexity: 1) those in so-called empty, outer space, which can't get

⁷cf. Donald Sherburne, A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1966) p. 40.

⁸Opinion expressed by Charles Birch, biologist and author, in a lecture at The School of Theology at Claremont, April 17, 1974.

themselves together enough to even make an object, 2) those composing inorganic objects, like rocks, 3) those composing living things and 4) dominant occasions. And then there is God, who is in a fifth category alone. Whitehead never refers to God as an actual occasion, but only as an actual entity. This is the only case in which an actual entity is not the same as an actual occasion for Whitehead. But even though God as an actual entity is different because of the incomprehensible vastness and complexity of his prehensions, Whitehead still maintains that God is not an ontological exception. God is a part of the same reality as the world and is participating in the same feelings.

Something else remains to be said about actual occasions and their interrelationships with the whole fabric of the universe. It is that in Whitehead's vision of reality every new actual occasion has a tie with every past occasion that ever happened. The tie is either positive or negative. If the occasion positively prehends a feeling, then that feeling becomes a part of its becoming and there is a positive tie to the past. If the presented feeling is not entertained, it becomes what Whitehead calls a "negative prehension,"⁹ and is "eliminated from feeling." In this way

⁹Whitehead, p. 35.

only those feelings which are compatible with the occasion's aim or which provide contrasts which can be integrated and which would enrich the final harmonization are allowed in and become a part of that occasion's life and satisfaction. It is necessary that the occasion decide to negativelyprehend some feelings because they are too far out, too irrelevant, to be able to be synthesized into a new unity. You can't handle everything at once and some feelings just don't fit in with what is happening at the moment. And you can't follow up on every possibility presented, either. Some possibilities have to be dropped in order to fulfill others. As my old teacher, Albert Outler, used to say, "You pays your money and you takes your choice."

But the occasion's decision to cut off these feelings still leaves a scar, because the subjective form of the negative prehension, i.e., the way in which that feeling would have been felt, is still present. It is present as a sense of what might have been but is not. The sense of what might have been is the occasion's negative bond with the universe and enters into the emotional complex of the final satisfaction.¹⁰ Thus Whitehead sees a tinge of

¹⁰Ibid, p. 66.

tragedy woven into the nature of things.

And the nature of things is to be in process. First, there is the process of the public life of actual occasions which is the flow of energy, the vector relationship, from the completed, perishing occasions to the new becoming ones. The completed occasion is an object for the becoming occasion; it is outside, out there, and thus is objectified, i.e., is public. It's right there in front of God and everybody doing its thing. It is this process which produces the phenomena which we experience as enduring objects, as the things we see and touch, like tables and rocks. It is the objective, public life of the actual occasions which produces that with which science deals, and even produces what we call space and time.

That's one kind of process. Then there is a second kind of process, the process of the private life of actual occasions, the process of becoming. This is the inner life of the thing-in-itself. It is what each occasion goes through to become itself. It's the process of "getting it together,"¹¹ in the privacy of its own subjectivity. Can you stand one more big word, one more Whiteheadian term?

¹¹Lee, Becoming of the Church, p. 57.

It's an important one. Whitehead calls this inner process the process of "concrecence." Concrecence literally means "a growing together." In one sense, an actual occasion creates itself through its process of concrecence. It pulls itself together, integrating and reintegrating its prehensions, its feelings, according to its own subjective aim, its purpose, until it reaches the completion of its work: its satisfaction. We have talked about this growing together, this process of synthesis, as though it happens slowly. Actually it happens instantaneously. The actual occasion concreces all at once; it grows together immediately. But when we analyze it to try to understand it, we talk about the phases of concrecence.

So, the occasion pulls itself together, creating itself, but it would not exist at all if it were not for God's presence. God is a necessary ingredient in the private life of the occasion. Without God there would be no possibilities, no way of feeling physical feelings and defining them, no concepts, no mentality, no life. God is the organ of novelty, the lure toward newness which keeps the world from sinking backwards into nothing. God lifts up, loves, watches over and upholds every tiny occasion, and the universe as a whole.

Game: Art Project on Acting Out the Becoming of an Actual Occasion

This is a game in which the becoming of an actual occasion is acted out in simple caricature by using white yarn for the initial physical prehensions and various colors of paint for the conceptual possibilities.

The yarn is labeled PHYSICAL PREHENSIONS (FEELINGS). The paint is put in one place and arranged in some kind of logical gradation. The place is labeled PRIMORDIAL NATURE OF GOD (STRUCTURE OF POSSIBILITY). Besides the paint, the "Structure of Possibility" place has scissors and string identified as VALUATION. The paint, scissors and string are labeled CONCEPTUAL PREHENSIONS (FEELINGS). There is also an envelope there marked INITIAL AIM. In the envelope is a model for coloring and weaving or arranging the yarn.

The participants would act out the three phases of a becoming occasion by first receiving the initial aim, and then the yarn, some of which is "negatively prehended" by being cut off. Then they would decide their "subjective aim" and proceed to color the yarn by means of the possibilities, i.e., the colors of paint. Then they would "value" it "up or down" according to the needs of the subjective aim by cutting the yarn to shorten it or by using the string to make pieces longer or thicker. Then the yarn

is integrated, arranged into a design which satisfies the subjective aim.

The participants could be further challenged to modify the game to show how novelty enters the process. The game should have the character of a creative project, or a puzzle to be worked out, and not be just an exercise of going through motions. Perhaps the participants will think of other ways to modify the game to better express the intent and to make it their own.

Session 4

EVERYTHING IS INTERRELATED, INCLUDING GOD AND THE WORLD

Some of the implications of the Whiteheadian "vision of reality" or metaphysics are drawn in this session. In the first part of the lecture, the asterisk diagram for an actual occasion is adapted for use as the image for the whole course. This "Whiteheadian Mandala" is an image which visually summarizes the points of the course. It will be used again in Session Six. The rest of the lecture points to how this metaphysics of relativity involves the interrelatedness of everything and lays a foundation for understanding human cultures, the environmental crisis, evolution, contemporary science and natural law. The overarching relationship is that of God and the world.

The study papers are the basis for an art form. The topics of the papers, "Beauty" and "Philosophy" have an indirect relationship with the lecture and with the next session. The creation of paintings are intended to give the participants a vehicle for expressing both their feelings and their thoughts. There may be some frustrations at this point and complete freedom should be given to portray and share whatever is personally meaningful. Watercolor or fingerpaint could be used. Another medium could be cut and paste collages from magazines.

Lecture: "We Are in it Together"

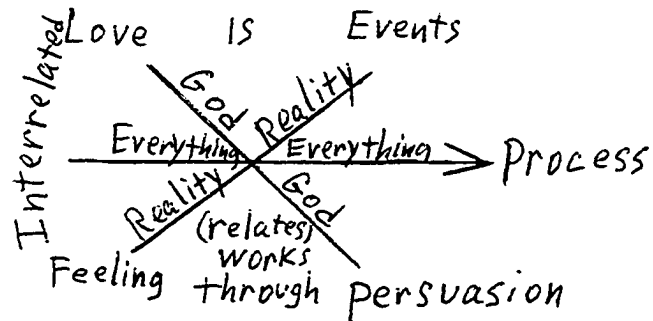
In the last lecture I used the symbol of an asterisk to try to point to the meaning of an actual occasion. I want to pick that up again and use it as an image for this whole course. There are three lines in the asterisk and six arms. Let's let each line designate one of the major subjects with which we are dealing: God, reality and everything, and each arm one of the predicates. This works out neatly but not perfectly when it comes to the reality line, which shows again that reality can't be perfectly systematized! Thus one line is the God statement line: God is love; God works through persuasion:

Love IS
 God
 Works
 through Persuasion

Another line is the reality statement line. Reality is events; events relate through feelings:

Love IS Events
 God
 Reality
 (relates)
 Feeling works
 through Persuasion

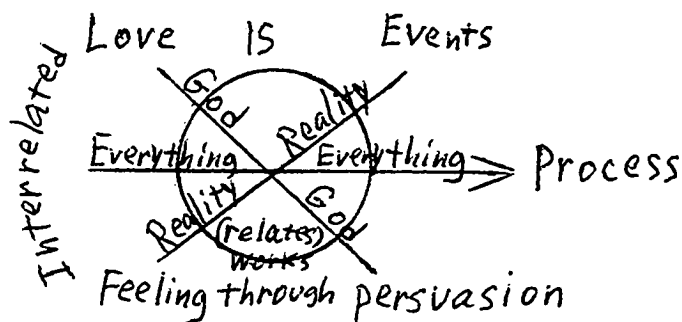
The subject of the third line is "everything." Everything is interrelated, including God and the world, and everything is in process, including God:



This is an image for a becoming occasion. We added a circle around the crux in order to indicate an occasion which was complete, which had reached satisfaction and so achieved what in Whiteheadian jargon is called "objective immortality," becoming part of the settled past, the ground out of which new occasions arise, and also becoming a part of the consequent nature of God. When we add a circle to our image, it completes it. A circle is a symbol of completeness. Nothing more can be added. This is true of an actual occasion. Once it reaches satisfaction, it does not change. After it concresces, grows together, it is concrete and doesn't change.

When it comes to our course emblem, I want to add a circle to indicate a kind of emotional or spiritual completeness. Whitehead calls this a sense of "Peace." We

will deal with this in the last session along with religious experience and Christology, but I will add it now to the emblem. It makes it kind of Whiteheadian Mandala:



And now, a poem; not an ancient one, but a modern one by Robert Frost. It is a rather long one entitled, "The Tuft of Flowers."

I went to turn the grass once after one
Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.

The dew was gone that made his blade so keen
Before I came to view the leveled scene.

I looked for him behind an isle of trees;
I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
And I must be, as he had been,--alone,

'As all must be,' I said within my heart,
'Whether they work together or apart.'

But as I said it, swift here passed me by
On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

Seeking with memories grown dim o'er night
Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.

And once I marked his flight go round and round,
As where some flower lay withering on the ground.

And then he flew as far as eye could see,
And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply,
And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first, and led my eye to look
At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook,

A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared
Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

I left my place to know them by their name,
Finding them butter-fly weed when I came.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus,
By leaving them to flourish, not for us,

Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,
But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.

The butterfly and I had lit upon,
Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,

That made me hear the wakening birds around,
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,

And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;

But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;

And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.

'Men work together,' I told him from the heart,
'Whether they work together or apart.'¹

¹Robert Frost, "The Tuft of Flowers," in A.J.M. Smith (ed.) Verse: English and American, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 547.

The Whiteheadian version of reality holds in balance this correlation of being alone and being together. Every actual entity enjoys a privacy, a subjectivity. It is the nature of reality. It is the way things are. Whiteheadian theology is not monistic. The multiplicity of the world is not finally reduced to one thing, either material or ideal, physical or mental. The world and the events which compose it are not finally just thoughts in the mind of God. There is a quantitative difference between you and God, as well as a qualitative difference. You are an actual entity, (when I say "you" I mean the self) and you are just as real as God. The decisions which you or any actual occasion make are finally free and therefore responsible decisions. You decide your own purpose, finally, and are free not to conform to the pressures coming to you from other occasions in your environment and from God's initial aim. Of course, there must be a kind of elementary conformity to the limits of the givenness of your environment if you as a living organism are to continue to exist. But you are not determined by the environment. You are not programmed by the past so that you must respond in a certain way. The element of freedom is necessary for there to be responsibility and there must be responsibility if moral values are to mean anything. And the final decision of an actual occasion is not known until after it

happens. While an occasion is in the process of becoming, its life is private, not public. So in Whiteheadian theology, not even God knows what decisions you will make before you make them. God knows what the possibilities are--God envisages all of the possibilities in general, and knows those which are possible of being actualized within a certain occasion. But not even God knows in advance which possibility you will choose because you are really finally free and undetermined.

But even though there is a multiplicity of actual entities which have privacy while they are in the process of becoming, the nature of reality is such that nothing remains private. Everything is interrelated, and because to exist means to have an effect, every actual entity has an effect on other actual entities. Indeed, each actual occasion has some effect, however trivial, on every other occasion in the universe. The process of transmitting feelings is fluid. It flows from one occasion to another. Each occasion is a synthesis of the prehensions received from other occasions. So each actual entity is a synthesis of syntheses of syntheses of syntheses. Each occasion integrates what it receives as many into one and then becomes one of many past occasions for the synthesis of a new occasion. So the becoming occasion can say, "All of history has conspired to bring me to this point." And each occasion

is in a sense a summing up of all the past occasions of the universe.

Since each occasion if made up of, is constituted by, the prehensions it receives from its past, its past has what Whitehead calls "causal efficacy" for the present. But the way the past causes the present is not like one pool-ball hitting another. Pool balls are not actual entities, they are enduring objects made up of societies of actual entities. On the level of enduring objects, on the level of pool balls, there is coercive force which can whap things and move them around. But on the level of actual occasions, the past has causal efficacy, not because of external force, but because it enters into the present occasion and becomes a part of it. The past occasion's feelings are transmitted and adopted as the present occasion's own feelings. In this way the past is immanent (i.e. within) in the present, and one actual entity enters into another.

I have a plaque in my kitchen which says, "All that we love deeply becomes a part of us." This is especially true because we are more open to that which we love. But it is also true to say that all we encounter becomes a part of us. Everything is interrelated.

What are the implications of this? This means that the Whiteheadian vision of reality is a metaphysics of

relativity. If everything is interrelated, then everything is relative. All this means is that everything is relational. Every actual entity exists because of and within its relationships with other entities. This idea is pretty easy to grasp when it comes to human society. Every person is formed by relationships: biologically, emotionally, culturally. Even though we may believe that the way we think is right, and the way we do things is right, it is really, after all, only our perspective of the way things are. And every perspective is conditioned by experiences and histories and values and purposes, i.e., by relationships both past and present. It is possible to broaden our perspective by expanding our relationships and deepening our experiences. This happens when we come in contact with and are open to persons of other cultures and societies. Perhaps there will eventually be one culture on earth. But even then it would not be possible to extract a person from her/his environment of relationships which inevitably conditions one's perspective, making it relative. Even if the famous man from Mars were to swoop down in his UFO and ogle us with his cyclops eye, he would view us, not from a totally unrelated perspective, but from his Martian point of view.

When we expand our sense of relativity to include not only human beings, but also all of nature, we enter a discussion of ecology. Our society's values in the past

have been based on a metaphysical view which sees human beings apart from and superior to the rest of nature. People and nature have not been seen as interrelated. Nature has been seen as the tool and the inexhaustible resource for supplying humanity's needs. There has been a metaphysical split between human beings and nature. The Judeo-Christian influence must bear part of the blame for the kind of values which have lead to the exploitation and then the pollution of nature and our environment. This is a long story which we will not go into now. But now that it is becoming widely recognized that our values are defective when it comes to the natural environment and that this can be traced to a vision of reality which considered the world as a second-rate reality from which to escape to heaven, or as merely the stage upon which the history of humanity is played out, the time is ripe to consider a more adequate way of coming at it. The Whiteheadian approach does not see nature as just the static stage on which the drama of human events is performed, or even a stage for the drama of the divine-human encounter. But neither does it submerge human existence by saying that, after all, we're only animals, only a part of nature. This would mean that people are determined by nature, are completely conditioned by their natural environment. Whiteheadian philosophy breaks through these old static dichotomies because of its

radically evolutionary view of the cosmos.² Humanity and nature can be seen as parts of a whole, interrelated and interdependent, without negating the human being's freedom and spiritual transcendence. We are within, but are not completely conditioned by nature, we are both immanent and transcendent. So also is every actual occasion, but the ability to transcend the environment increases with mentality. Whiteheadian theology can affirm evolution and human continuity with nature, and human dignity and freedom at the same time.

A metaphysics of relativity also provides a philosophical foundation for scientific theories of the relativity of space and time. I am not a scientist and feel uneasy and unsure of myself in talking about this because I know so little about it. I know the basic idea that space and time are not two isolated things, but are related to each other as one frame of reference, and this space-time frame of reference is relative to the perceiver. As I heard one student put it, it is not space and time, but "every where-when" as a relationship. Space-time is not a container within which events happen; it's the other way

²Lecture by John Cobb at The School of Theology at Claremont, January 6, 1975.

around. Our sense of space and time is derived from the happening of events. It is our relationship to events which gives us a sense of before and after, a sense of time. And what we call space is derived from our relationship to the fabric of actual occasions which make up the universe. There is no empty space which contains things. Everything is interrelated in a continuum. Whitehead calls it the "extensive continuum."³ Our universe, our environment, is an organism; it is full of actual occasions and our sense of extension in space and time is derived from them. I am told that this is not just Whitehead; it is quantum physics. Whitehead worked out his own theory of relativity which was different than Einstein's but arrived at basically the same place. They disagreed on some interpretations of why light and gravity do what they do. Whitehead said Einstein confused physics with geometry.⁴ I have heard that Einstein once visited Whitehead and spent a couple of hours talking. When Einstein came out a reporter asked, "What did he say?" "I don't know," replied Einstein, "I didn't understand him."

Whitehead's vision of the internal relationship of

³Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 438

⁴Reported by Dean Fowler in a lecture at The School of Theology at Claremont, April 3, 1974.

actual occasions has profound implications for understanding the laws of nature and how they work. In a previous lecture we said a little about Newtonian physics and how the world was seen as a machine, like a clock. In that mechanistic conception of things the ultimate units of nature were thought to be bits and pieces of reality which were disconnected from each other. These bits and pieces were complete in themselves. They had no need of anything outside of themselves in order to maintain their existence. Whatever character or properties they had were their private property forever and their relations with other bits and pieces were external. Since each little bit of reality had no need to relate to others, but in order to have a universe it was necessary for them to enter into relationships, these relationships had to be imposed on them from the outside. So, in the Newtonian view, God imposed the Laws of Nature on the units of reality. The bits and pieces of nature had to be arranged by an outside force and pushed around in certain patterns of behavior. The apple that bonked Mr. Newton on the head was obeying the law of gravity which God, who resided somewhere outside the system, address unknown, had imposed upon the world as a principle of behavior. "A transcendent imposing Deity"⁵

⁵Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 113.

works in a certain way, namely, by coercion.

But, if instead of having a metaphysical doctrine of external relations which requires a doctrine of imposed law, the metaphysical vision is one of internal relations among the units of reality, then the understanding of the nature of law is that of immanent law. "By the doctrine of Law as immanent," Whitehead writes, "it is meant that the order of nature expresses the characters of the real things which jointly compose the existences to be found in nature. When we understand the essences of these things, we thereby know their mutual relations to each other."⁶ In other words, law and order are expressions of the inner feelings and purposes of actual entities and the patterns of order, the patterns of behavior, arise from the flow of the entities' mutual relationships. Law is immanent because it arises out of the units of reality themselves, rather than being imposed upon them from the outside. This view "presupposes the essential interdependence of things,"⁷ says Whitehead, and it also has some very interesting consequences.

One consequence is that scientists cannot expect 100% conformation to any law. This is because, if a pattern of behavior arises out of the mutual relations of

⁶Ibid., pp.111, 112

⁷Ibid., p. 112

actual entities, i.e., because they have feelings in common they are passing along, every once in awhile there is going to be a non-conformist in the group who doesn't have this particular feeling. This, says Whitehead, is why natural laws have a statistical character.

Another consequence is that the idea should be abandoned that there are absolute, eternal laws regulating all behavior.

...Since the laws of nature depend on the individual characters of the things constituting nature, as the things change, then corresponding laws will change. Thus the modern evolutionary view of the physical universe should conceive of the laws of nature as evolving concurrently with the things constituting the environment. Thus the conception of the universe as evolving subject to fixed, eternal laws regulating all behaviour should be abandoned.⁸

That could be a commentary on the gospel story about Jesus' disciples being criticized for breaking the sabbath law because of human need. "And he [Jesus] said to [the critics], 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.'"⁹ It also makes me think of a line from the hymn, "Once to Every Man and Nation," by James Russell Lowell:

New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth,

⁸Ibid.

⁹Mark 2: 27.

They must upward still and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth.¹⁰

So the implication of the interrelatedness of everything is a metaphysics of relativity, and a metaphysics of relativity has profound consequences for our understanding of the relationships of people with one another, our values regarding the environment and our understanding of science and natural law. But doesn't relativity and the immanence of law banish God from the universe? Doesn't that mean that the world is self-caused and self-sustaining as David Hume said? No, says Whitehead. In itself "the doctrine of immanence provides absolutely no reason why the universe should not be steadily relapsing into lawless chaos."¹¹ This view of the universe implies, no, it requires, what he calls "a stable actuality" whose interrelatedness with everything else "secures an inevitable trend towards order. The Platonic 'persuasion' is required."¹²

So for Whitehead, God is required to explain why the universe does not disintegrate into chaos. God does not cause the world by imposing law by coercion. God

¹⁰The Methodist Hymnal, (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964), #242.

¹¹Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 115.

¹²Ibid.

enables the immanent pattern of behavior to maintain itself, and not only to maintain itself; God continuously lures the world toward fresh adventure, toward new and richer forms of order and experience. This is done through what Hartshorne calls "the divine relativity."¹³ Rather than being less relative, God is the most relative actual entity of all. That is, God is related to every actual occasion. Every other actual occasion feels only those past occasions which make up its immediate world. God feels every actual occasion in the universe. We know only that which our personal experiences and relationships have brought us, so our perspectives are limited and relative. God knows everything because God's experience and relationships are all inclusive. So God's perspective is the only perfect one in the sense of being complete because it is completely relative. And God not only knows everything but also values everything, both in the sense of caring about it and in the sense of making judgments about it.

This may sound familiar and tame, but it is actually a radical and important reconception of God and of God's relationship with the world. It's importance can be illustrated by our ecological catastrophe. It is of utmost importance that Christians let go of a conception of a God

¹³Charles Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

who is outside of the universe, who doesn't care what happens to the universe as long as the good guys are saved, and who values and interacts only with human beings. We need to worship and emulate a God who tenderly cares about the whole world, who treasures "the intrinsic value of all the species of life,"¹⁴ who is "located with all things without being identified with all things, thus having the capacity for making judgments about better and worse." These words of John Cobb describe the consequent and primordial natures of God as understood in Whiteheadian theology.

Study Papers by Lee and Whitehead and Art Form: Painting Visual Impressions.

Have the participants read the excerpts from Bernard Lee's The Becoming of the Church on Beauty (pp. 59-61), and also the excerpt from Adventures of Ideas, Section VI of "Foresight" (pp. 98,99). Then ask them to paint individual pictures depicting any of the ideas from these readings and/or other feelings which are meaningful to them. In small groups they explain their pictures to one another. Let the pictures be saved to use as decor for the Closing Celebration.

¹⁴This and succeeding quotes are from a lecture by John Cobb, School of Theology at Claremont, May 20, 1974.

Before beginning a presentation of some of the specifics from the Whiteheadian system that will pertain to the discussion of Church and Sacrament in the latter chapters, I want to call attention to an important aspect of his systematic work. That aspect is to some extent a mood, and to some extent a pervasive, if sometimes lurking, model. I mean the aesthetic mood, with beauty as a model of the goal of all process. In as lovely a tribute as I think any man might make to his wife, Whitehead wrote:

The effect of my wife upon my outlook on the world has been so fundamental that it must be mentioned as an essential factor in my philosophic output . . . Her vivid life has taught me that beauty, moral and aesthetic, is the aim of existence; and that kindness, and love, and artistic satisfaction are among its modes of attainment.²⁰

The structure of beauty, as outlined most clearly in *Adventures of Ideas*,²¹ is all put paradigmatic for the synthesis of *Process and Reality*, the major work of Whitehead. Beauty is a larger category even than truth or goodness or value, each of which can be considered an aspect of beauty.

In view of the organic nature of the universe, relating is a picture of what is and relatedness is a picture of what has already come to be. For Whitehead, the aim of the process of relating is beauty, as he said in the citation just above: beauty is the aim of existence. Higher forms of beauty require a much more intricate pattern of inter-relations. The degree of beauty achieved in a particular act of becoming depends upon how the parts that can possibly go into some unity are selected, and how effectively they meet the demands of mutual inter-relatedness. A minor form of beauty, i.e., low intensity, derives

from the simple fact that the mutual inhibition has been eliminated from the multiple parts that have entered into a harmony. There is simply a lack of discord. However, when there are strong contrasts among the many items that might possibly be unified, the various relations between those items must be much more intricate and delicate and nuanced, if the final result is to be one of harmony. But when such an arrangement is brought off satisfactorily, the beauty achieved is more intense and more interesting.

Take, for example, possible room decor and arrangements. If the possible furnishings for a drawing room include both French provincial and colonial American, and several colors, a usual procedure would be to sort out the two styles, and keep all the pieces that are green or go easily with green (or some other color unity). Someone with a keener sense of color might keep not only what blends with green, but what contrasts sharply with it. Perhaps a still keener eye would hold on to pieces of furniture from both styles, since finding a way to put them together successfully would heighten attention to the particularities of each style. But it would take much more arranging and rearranging to achieve such an aim. When it's all French provincial and green it is relatively easy for any one item to be placed almost anywhere in the room and still relate well to the whole. But as styles and colors are mixed, each item must relate not just vaguely to the whole, but specifically to each constituent part, and especially to the nearer parts. Altering the position of any one piece of furniture might call for re-arranging the entire room. And two colors which would be incompatible next to each other, will often, through the intervention of colors placed between them, contribute more to the intensity of the overall effect than either color alone. But in that case, a very special arrangement is needed so that those colors can be entertained as effective contrasts rather than as incompatibles. Called for are a delicate balance and a keen sense of pattern, if "variety with effective contrast"²² is to be achieved as a more intense mode of the beautiful.

Whitehead and a Whiteheadian Christology 61

Beauty is the internal conformation of the various items of experience with each other, for the production of maximum effectiveness. Beauty thus concerns the inter-relations of the various components of Reality . . . Thus any part of experience can be beautiful. The teleology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty.²³

Whitehead accepts the notion that the trend of evolution is upward or forward; it is a creative *advance*. It is clear from the text just cited that he has chosen an aesthetic model to describe the teleology which accounts for the creative advance:

The metaphysical doctrine, here expounded, finds the foundation of the world in aesthetic experience . . . All order is therefore aesthetic order . . . The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order.²⁴

SECTION VI. But the motive of success is not enough. It produces a short-sighted world which destroys the sources of its own prosperity. The cycles of trade depression which afflict the world warn us that business relations are infected through and through with the disease of short-sighted motives. The robber barons did not conduce to the prosperity of Europe in the Middle Ages, though some of them died prosperously in their beds. Their example is a warning to our civilization. Also we must not fall into the fallacy of thinking of the business world in abstraction from the rest of the community. The business world is one main part of the very community which is the subject-matter of our study. The behaviour of the community is largely dominated by the business mind. A great society is a society in which its men of business think greatly of their functions. Low thoughts mean low behaviour, and after a brief orgy of exploitation low behaviour means a descending standard of life. The general greatness of the community, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, is the first condition for steady prosperity, buoyant, self-sustained, and commanding credit. The Greek philosopher who laid the foundation of all our finer thoughts ended his most marvellous dialogue with the reflection that the ideal state could never arrive till philosophers are kings. Today, in an age of democracy, the kings are the plain citizens pursuing their various avocations. There can be no successful democratic society till general education conveys a philosophic outlook.

Philosophy is not a mere collection of noble sentiments. A deluge of such sentiments does more harm than good. Philosophy is at once general and concrete, critical and appreciative of direct intuition. It is not—or, at least, should not be—a ferocious debate between irritable professors. It is a survey of possibilities and their comparison with actualities. In philosophy, the fact, the theory, the alternatives, and the ideal, are weighed together. Its gifts are insight and foresight, and a sense of the worth of life, in short, that sense of importance which nerves all civilized effort. Mankind can flourish in the lower stages of life with merely barbaric flashes of thought. But when civilization culminates, the absence of a coördinating philosophy of life, spread throughout the community, spells decadence, boredom, and the slackening of effort.

Every epoch has its character determined by the way its populations re-act to the material events which they encounter. This reaction is determined by their basic beliefs—by their hopes, their fears, their judgments of what is worth while. They may rise to the greatness of an opportunity, seizing its drama, perfecting its art, exploiting its adventure, mastering intellectually and physically the network of relations that constitutes the very being of the epoch. On the other hand, they may collapse before the perplexities confronting them. How they act depends partly on their courage, partly on their intellectual grasp. Philosophy is an attempt to clarify those fundamental beliefs which finally determine the emphasis of attention that lies at the base of character.

Mankind is now in one of its rare moods of shifting its outlook. The mere compulsion of tradition has lost its force. It is our business—philosophers, students, and practical men—to re-create and reënact a vision of the world, including those elements of reverence and order without which society lapses into riot, and penetrated through and through with unflinching rationality. Such a vision is the knowledge which Plato identified with virtue. Epochs for which, within the limits of their development, this vision has been widespread are the epochs unfading in the memory of mankind.

Our discussion has insensibly generalized itself. It has passed beyond the topic of Commercial Relations to the function of a properly concrete philosophy in guiding the purposes of mankind.

Session 5

EVERYTHING IS IN PROCESS, INCLUDING GOD

The aim of this session is to describe process theology's approach to the question of how to have faith in the midst of constant change and negative conditions, the meaning of God's judgment and the conquest of evil and the openness of the future as the context of the meaning of life. The paper sets the stage for the lecture and guided discussion.

It is hoped that the students will get a sense of God's participation with us in the ongoing process which is life and thus see that process theology is a fresh way of interpreting the basic affirmation of the Christian faith even though it diverges from orthodoxy on certain points.

In the discussion of the "problem" and the conquest of evil I would emphasize two points. The first is how the entrenched assumption of God as all-powerful both creates the problem and also prevents us from reconceptualizing it. The second is how we actually do cope with suffering and evil in our own lives--we cope with it by putting it into perspective and weaving it into the fabric of our lives. This is also how process theology sees God coping with and transmuting evil into good.

The guided discussion at the close of the session is intended to help the participants identify God's leading within their own experiences--perhaps in a way they had not previously considered.

Study Paper by Cobb on "The One Who Calls."

This paper is an excerpt from John Cobb's book God and the World. Taken from the chapter, "The One Who Calls" (pp. 44,45; 63,66) it discusses ways to conceive of God as the one who calls us into an open future.

The Judaism of Jesus' day associated God primarily with its national life and institutions. God was viewed as the transcendent authority whose past acts sanctioned the inherited way of life and forbade its alteration. On the other hand, Jesus' way of announcing the coming Kingdom implied quite a different understanding of God. Instead of sanctioning received institutions and laws, God is he whose coming puts an end to their authority. Thus, even in the present, all that is inherited from the past appears as of only relative or provisional value in the light of the new action of God.

For Jesus, to know God was not to intensify obedience to ancient laws; it was to be free from bondage to such laws. To respond to God was to give up the security of habitual, customary, and socially approved actions and to live in terms of a radically new and uncontrollable future. The present moment

THE ONE WHO CALLS

45

was always a time for a decision required by the coming of the new reality and made possible by the radical forgiveness of all that was past.

These comments on the locus of God in the message of Jesus serve to explain the contemporary consensus that classical theism has too often embodied an understanding of God quite different from that of Jesus. This theism has tended to confront us with the God who sanctions norms and institutions established in the past rather than the God who calls us into the new future. Instead of seeking God through the sense of the Whole, of absolute dependence, of order, of obligation, and of the holy, the Christian will be in greater continuity with Jesus if he seeks God in the call to go forward beyond the achievements of the past and the security of what is established and customary.

Of course, the modern Christian must always recognize that in this approach, as in any other, a great distance separates his experience and conceptuality from Jesus. We cannot go back to Jesus if that would mean simply repeating his beliefs. We can only go forward in a way that somehow corresponds for our time to the meaning of his life and message for the men of his time. My proposal is that we can do this best by attending to what I am hereafter designating as the *call forward*.

Our task now is to consider this call forward more closely. The following pages will pursue this task, beginning with an analysis of the call as an aspect of experience and moving to consideration of the kind of objectivity possessed by that which calls and to the possibility that "that which calls" may be also "One Who Calls."

There is much more that can be said. Apart from belief in God, conscious or unconscious, there is little ground for hope. Apart from belief in God, the reason for concern about one's motives and one's responsibility for them becomes obscure. Apart from belief in God, the claim of the neighbor upon one can only be understood as arbitrary and unfounded. When belief in the God of the Bible is lost, new divinities of the soil, of sexuality, of race and tribe arise and old ones reappear, and the grounds for the prophetic "No!" are gone. Apart from belief in God, history and historical existence become intolerable and barren and we must fall into a pre- or post-historical existence. All this, and more, I believe with respect to the *importance* of belief, which means, of course, of *right* belief. But in these chapters this can only be asserted — not explained or justified.

In the first chapter, four objections to belief in God, understood as the Creator—Lord of history—Lawgiver—Judge, were treated at some length. I argued that the traditional approaches to God have little point of contact in the modern sensibility, that they have no distinctive grounding in Jesus Christ, that they lead to doctrines which make God responsible for evil, and that the resultant imagination tends to represent God as a restrictive and repressive force over against man. It will be instructive to consider now whether the understanding of God as the One Who Calls us into the new future is relatively free from these weaknesses. I think that it is.

First, the sense of movement into the open future, while it still must struggle against reductionistic naturalisms and rationalisms which seek to explain everything out of the past, is characteristic of a growing sensibility in our time. As the mechanistic cosmology continues to lose ground, the awareness of this dimension of our experience can be further heightened, and we may hope that human sensibility will become increasingly oriented to the future.

Second, although the conception of God that is here proposed is not to be attributed to Jesus or to the early Christians, it does have an important continuity with their witness. *Its fundamental import for our experience parallels that which their imagery had for theirs.* In both cases God is understood as meeting man in the present in terms of the future, calling him to embody a new and demanding possibility. Without asserting that the view here presented is *the* Christian way of thinking of God, I may legitimately affirm that it is *a* way informed by distinctively Christian motifs.

Third, the problem of evil does not disappear when we think of God in this way, but it loses much of its force. The world is not seen any longer as embodying an omnipotent sovereign's will but rather as responding ever anew to a possibility offered. That the response is imperfect does not imply the imperfection of what is offered. There is no world that does not reflect the influence of God's past agency, but there is also no world that is the product of that agency alone. The terrible reality of evil is neither denied nor attributed to God. (See below, Chapter 4.)

Fourth, God as understood in this way is not a repressive force but a liberating one. Granted, liberation is not the removal of all constraint or the sanctioning of every mode of selfish conduct. But the limits and burdens of the past are constantly transcended by God's agency. What man is offered is the fulfillment — not of every passing desire — but of his capacities for vital and full life and for spending himself for the lives of others.

Furthermore, when we think of God centrally as the One Who Calls us beyond ourselves to the more that is possible, we need not think that the reality which we designate is in itself a different deity from that which has been known through other aspects of our experience. I made a similar point in the preceding chapter in connection with the five ways of approaching God there designated. I indicated that the Whole may also be the Source of natural order, the Ground of being, the Source of obligation, and the Holy One. The problem

THE ONE WHO CALLS

65

arises, not in any one of these designations of God, but in making one or another of these or their combination central. I showed that they have often been combined with certain Old Testament motifs in such a way as to give rise to what can be a humanly repressive understanding of God. If now we understand God fundamentally as He Who Calls us to ever-greater love, life, and freedom, this does not exclude the possibility that he is also in some important sense the Ground of our being. Perhaps we must recognize that it is precisely the call to be something more than we have been which initiates and activates every new act of being by which we constitute ourselves. Perhaps it is just this ever-novel lure that is the Source of the order exhibited by nature and the Ground of our moral obligation. Perhaps that which we meet in the forward call which works throughout the cosmos is nothing less than the all-inclusive Whole. And perhaps the sense of the holy derives from our encounter with just this Whole.

If so, and I myself believe all this, then our concern must not be to deny the holy Creator-Lord of history-Lawgiver-Judge but to understand him rightly. Instead of seeing the reality revealed in Jesus in terms of a predetermined concept of transcendent and omnipotent deity, we must reinterpret deity in the light of what is given us in Jesus. That means that the Creator-Lord of history is not the all-determinative cause of the course of natural and historical events, but a lover of the world who calls it ever beyond what it has attained by affirming life, novelty, consciousness, and freedom again and again. The Lawgiver is not the source of arbitrary, imposed moral rules, established once and for all from on high, but the establisher of ever-new possibilities of righteousness which both destroy and fulfill generalizations based upon the past. The Judge is not one who, at some future date, will reward and punish in accordance with our obedience or disobedience, but the one who can give us only what we will receive, thereby "rewarding" the responsive with new and richer challenges but "punishing" the unresponsive by the poverty of their new possibilities. The Holy One is not the primordial sacred which

66

GOD AND THE WORLD

transcends and annihilates all separateness and individuality through mysterious and dehumanizing cults, but the immanent-transcendent Ground of life and creativity which calls us ever forward in and through the ordinary events of daily life and the often terrifying occurrences of human history.

Lecture: "The Open Future"

One of the most important dimensions of a Christian understanding of human existence is the sense that history is moving toward a culmination or a goal. The sense that history is going somewhere, that there is a beginning and an end, is a fundamental perspective which Christianity shares with its mother religion, Judaism, and with its sister, Islam. This perspective separates the Judeo-Christian-Islamic family from the great religions arising out of India, Hinduism and Buddhism, which see history as recurring in cycles.

The sense that there is an end toward which time is moving has been the foundation for seeing history as a succession of unique events which can never be repeated and which have a purpose. Christianity has always understood history as a linear, as a time line which is going in one direction, from past to future. It may seem strange to labor this point because it is so much a part of our perspective, that it seems self-evident. But, in fact, this way of sensing history is a Western cultural presupposition and is part of our vision of reality. Eastern cultures have a different presupposition, which is that the events of history are cyclical. Everything which happens has happened before at some time. Perhaps it was a million years

ago, but it is not unique and, given enough time, it will all happen again. Besides, the events of history are not ultimately real. In the East, the mood is that there is nothing new under the sun. There are no genuinely new possibilities.

In the Bible the sense of events as moving forward is set within a story beginning with creation and the Garden of Eden and ending with the final judgment, the overcoming of evil, the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of this world and the coming of the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. Within this frame of reference, within this "big story," the "little stories" of our personal lives (as William Beardslee has put it) are played out.¹ The meaning of our little stories has been supplied by their being a part of the big story of what God is doing. Christian existence has had purpose because one must help achieve the goal, or one must be ready for the end in order to survive the final judgment and participate in everlasting life.

The Christian movement was born during a time and in a place when the sense of expectation of the end of history was extremely strong. The Jews were looking for the

¹William Beardslee, "Openness to the New in Process Philosophy and Apocalyptic," address at The School of Theology at Claremont, March 27, 1972.

messiah who would herald the beginning of the end of history by God's intervention, or, at least, the end of the present unendurable situation and the beginning of a new era of peace and fulfillment. The New Testament breathes the air of the excitement that time is short. The end is near and we are living "in between the times," in between the beginning of the end and the final end. The present is lit up by the light shining from the end of time, and the meaning of what is happening now is viewed in the light of events at the end. God was opening the door to a bright new future for those who loved him and were faithful.

The expectation of the end and the biblical images which expressed it have waxed and waned depending upon the situation of particular Christian groups and the state of world affairs. But apart from the biblical images, the Christian understanding of history as having a beginning and an end has passed into Western thought as the presupposition of the linear character of history. And even though the biblical vision has not been retained in its literal details by most people, its broad categories have been retained and the details have been supplied by whatever goal gives purpose and meaning to personal life. For instance, for the Judeo-Christian heresy of Marxism, the goal is the classless society and history takes on meaning as the move-

ment toward the resolution of class conflict. For scientific humanism, the vision is a world free from disease and toil, a state which science and technology will achieve. Whatever the differences in detail according to faith, the basic structure of believing in time moving toward a goal, an end, in which a door will be opened onto a new mode of life was retained.

But now this frame of reference is disintegrating. In spite of the recent wide-spread resurgence of an expectation of the end, the collapse of the two-story universe has resulted in a withering away of the "big story" within which history has been set. When the "big story" is no longer believed, it produces a collapse of the meaning and purpose of history itself, and thus a collapse of the "little stories of personal lives which were oriented within that frame of reference. This is another way of talking about the "crisis of faith" we discussed in the first session.

The biblical images, as William Beardslee tersely puts it, "promised more than they could deliver."² That can also be said of the various secular versions of the "eschaton," i.e., the last days. Somehow both the Second Coming and the utopian paradises have been delayed. The biblical

²Ibid.

story is rooted in a belief in the reality of God, but is set within a pre-scientific conception of the universe. The secular big stories did away with God, but as John Cobb pointed out in our paper, "Apart from belief in God, history and historical existence become intolerable and barren and we must fall into a pre- or post-historical existence."³ So without an intelligible scientific conception of the universe, the biblical belief in God cannot be maintained by modern people and the biblical story of the future promises more than it can deliver. On the other hand, without a belief in God as "One who calls" us into the future, the various secularized versions of the meaning and goal of history cannot be maintained, so they too, promise more than they can deliver. The result is a crisis of faith, a collapse of purpose in personal life, and a collapse of meaning for history in general.

This collapse has resulted in a sense of nihilism, i.e., that nothing matters; or it has brought on a search for finding meaning in the moment, in the "now," since the future no longer makes sense. The search for meaning in the present moment, apart from the past or the future, has sometimes taken the form of Western existentialism, which emphasizes having the courage to make decisions and to take

³John B. Cobb, Jr., God and the World (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 63.

responsibility for life even though there is no meaning and no future. Or the search may turn to Eastern forms of mystical experience, the search for an "eternal now" in the present moment. A recent example of this dynamic is how the failure of the reformist and revolutionary movements of the 1960's to achieve lasting change resulted in a collapse of meaning for many young people, with a turning away from trying to find purpose within history by changing the structures of society. So they began seeking the "now" in the mysticism of drugs or Eastern religions or body sensuality. The Jesus movement among young people is also a spin-off from this, and the current revival of interest in the Second Coming, "the rapture," etc., derives much of its motivation from the same thrust.

The vision of reality of Whiteheadian theology provides a fresh context for dealing with this vital dimension of the Christian faith, the dimension of the meaning of history which gives purpose to life. Process thought provides, I believe, a still more excellent way of approaching the questions with which the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith deals: the questions of how to have faith in the midst of constant change and negative conditions, the reality of God and God's judgment, the conquest of evil and the openness of the future.

We said in a previous lecture that Whiteheadian

thought is Johannine in tone. This was in reference to its incarnational emphasis. Process theology also follows John in the matter of eschatology, in thinking about the last days and the judgment of God. The gospel of John was the last New Testament gospel written. It was published from seventy to a hundred years after the founding of the Christian movement, when it was becoming apparent that the end had not come during the lifetime of the first generations of Christians. The intense expectation of Paul and the other first Christians had not been fulfilled. John dealt with this issue by refocusing the point of attention. Without rejecting a future day of resurrection, he shifted the emphasis from the future to the present, and at the same time provided a way to understand the relationship between the present and the future in terms other than just waiting for the end. The time of decision was shifted from then to now. In John Jesus says to Lazarus' sister, Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life..."⁴ New life is present now and has to do with one's decision regarding Jesus. This means that the time of judgment is also shifted from the end to the present. "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already...and this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds

⁴John 11:25

were evil."⁵ This shift from the future to the present is undergirded by John's doctrine of the incarnation and by his emphasis on the abiding Spirit which nourishes and guides the disciples into the future. The disciples are the branches of a growing vine, and the Spirit which gives them new life will also lead them into the future and unfold new possibilities, new truth, when the time is ripe. (John 15, 16)

Process theology also emphasizes the present moment as the time and place in which God relates to the world in giving possibilities for new life and as the time of judgment. And, since in this vision of reality everything is in process and is always becoming something else, the future is open. God is leading the world into the future. This places Whiteheadian process thought squarely within the Western tradition. Every event, every actual occasion, is real, unique, and unrepeatable and history is moving from the past into the future. What is not traditional in Whiteheadian theology is the doctrine that the future is radically open with no ultimate end expected. This does not mean that it is expected that everything will

⁵John 3:18, 19.

stay basically the same as it is now--it's the other way around--the process expectation for this world is that it will never stop changing. It will continue to reach higher peaks of fulfillment. When one mountain peak is conquered, there will always be another, higher range beckoning on the horizon. The "creative advance" will never stop.

The collapse of meaning in history is the collapse of the story line, the collapse of the narrative. Without narrative the individual events fall apart and there are no real possibilities to be fulfilled in the future. The Whiteheadian vision can help restore a sense of narrative, a sense of story, by restoring a sense of real possibility.⁶ It does make a difference what you decide to do. You are actualizing possibilities which have a direct influence on the future. But the future is not determined. First, it is not determined in the scientific sense that since the future is caused by the past, it therefore must be completely determined by the past; that all of the cards have been dealt and now it's just a matter of how they are played. Nor is the future determined in a religious sense. It is precisely this sense of religious predestination which has collapsed. Process theology believes God has a general

⁶Beardslee

purpose for the world, and also a specific aim for each occasion, but you might say that the old script has been lost and it is up to us to write our own script. The purpose is there and the possibilities keep arising, but our story has not yet been written. If life is a drama, it is improvisational drama in which we are all actors, including God. This certainly makes life a great adventure.

So the future is open in the sense that my decisions carry weight in shaping the course of events; that the possibilities which are presented are real and the choices made among them are real. But the future is open in the sense that possibilities for courses of action will arise which cannot be foreseen or predicted on the basis of what we now know. To say this is to affirm the existence of God. Especially when all the present possibilities are negative, hope means knowing that new possibilities will arise in the future. Because God transcends the world with all of its presently actualized possibilities, there is still hope that something totally new will come into existence. In this sense, God still "intervenes" in the world. Our hope is in God who is the organ of new possibilities, the source of novelty and the lure for the actualization of new things under the sun.

Every possibility, however, including novel ones, comes into existence through some specific actual occasion,

in some particular space and time. It is here, in each present moment, that the light which enlightens every occasion, and every person, illuminates the relevant possibilities for that occasion. It is here that God's unremitting initial aim is felt, intermingled with the impulses of the world. It is here that God's grace and God's judgment operate.

The initial aim of every occasion is God's will for it. God's will is that it realize the highest value possible within the limits of the conditions in which it exists. God's will is perfection in the sense of what is possible for that becoming occasion. If what is actualized is the best possible, or close to it in strength, then the next occasion's possibilities are expanded for realizing more value. The relevant limits are reset. God's initial aim is revalued, and richer and deeper possibilities can be presented. If, on the other hand, the occasion falls far short of the best possible in reaching its satisfaction, then the strength which is carried on to the next occasion is weakened and the possibilities which it can actualize are more meager. This is the judgment.

In the previous session we read about Whitehead's emphasis on beauty as the motivation and goal of life. The measure of value for him is "the strength of beauty." The strength of beauty is composed of and measured by two as-

pects: massiveness or breadth, and intensity or depth. A feeling has massiveness or breadth when it has complexity and contrasts within it. A Bach fugue is massive compared to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" played on the kazoo. Intensity, or depth, may have to do with loudness, whether visual or auditory loudness, or it may have to do with emotional depth, with feeling something deeply. Intensity is passionate. Something may have massiveness or breadth without much depth, and so be superficial. Or it may have a lot of depth and intensity, but be narrow in its perspective. To achieve the best possible satisfaction means the harmonization, the balancing of the richness, the complexity, of massiveness with the force, the passion, of intensity in order to produce the best integration of breadth and depth of feeling. The power, the effect, achieved by just the right proportions of massiveness and intensity is "the strength of beauty." The more strength of beauty there is, the more value an occasion achieves. For Whitehead, the value of an occasion is measured by the richness of the variety of contrasts it can harmonize into a unity, along with the amount of intensity of feeling it can carry. And the feelings of other occasions are the sources of this richness and depth. So, in order to experience the breadth and depth of the strength of beauty, one must be open to

others. The value, the breadth and depth of one's own life corresponds to one's openness to others. The more one is open, the more breadth of variety is experienced and the deeper the feelings of joy and of pain.

You see, even though actual occasions occur as unique individuals, they always occur in community with others. And even though the judgment of God is upon the value an individual achieves, the judgment is in terms of one's relationships with others. The perfect will of God that each achieve the best possible is always set in the midst of community. The strength which is achieved cannot be kept, it is given to the others for the sake of their becoming. And the punishment for missing the mark is a deprivation of community.

In this view of God's judgment there is always grace and there is always the confrontation with the demand of God's will. It is as Bernard Loomer puts it, "a structure which is a stubborn and unyielding fact that must be taken into account..."⁷ There is grace because in each moment there is a fresh opportunity to let go of the past and lay hold of new possibilities. And there is also in

⁷Bernard Loomer, "Christian Faith and Process Philosophy," in Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves (eds.) (Indianapolis:Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 65

each moment the demand to respond to the best possible, to fulfill the initial aim, the will of God for that moment.

I quote from Bernard Loomer again:

The unyieldingness of this order is needed to protect man from himself, from his demonic distortions and his defensive escapes and denials. It is needed to coerce man to face himself and to recognize himself for what he is. At the same time, the sometimes gentle working involved in the restructuring of our minds and hearts in faith is necessary to release those burdened down with oppressive pasts. Man in his freedom can attempt to disregard this inevitable presence, but we always encounter this structured process, either as companion or as tormentor, "either in fellowship or in wrath."⁸ ...God is accessible, but he is not manageable. ...

In the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25, the judgment is based on specific occasions of possibilities to be open to others.

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me..."
(Matthew 25:35,36 RSV)

The judgment of God is based on the ideal response for each occasion. For the Christian, the ideal is the love and openness and self-giving exemplified in Jesus Christ. The criterion for God's judgment is the love of Jesus. Ultimately, it is the law of love which is the criterion by which the world is judged and the judge is one who loves us.

⁸Loomer, p. 86

Love has to do with the process of feeling the feelings of others.

This is also the way in which God deals with evil in Whiteheadian theology. How does God work? God works only through persuasion and on the level of actual entities. Much of what we call evil is the effect of natural phenomena seen from a human perspective. A volcano erupting without damaging property or hurting people would be called a spectacular sight. If the same event destroyed a city, it would be a catastrophe. When the power of God is thought to be coercive and God is considered to be the only creator and to have all the power, then everything is God's fault and we have the "problem" of evil from which a good and loving God must be exonerated. But if reality is seen as events which are real in themselves with limited but real freedom, then what has been called natural evil is seen from a different perspective. And human sin is also seen as a misuse of freedom, rather than as a predestined condition.

But God can be considered to be responsible for evil in one sense. John Cobb writes:

If God is understood as that factor in the universe which makes for novelty, life, intensity of feeling, consciousness, freedom, and in man for genuine concern for others, and which provides that measure of order which supports these, we must recognize that he is also responsible in a significant way for the evil in the

world. If there were nothing at all or total chaos, or if there were only some very simple structure of order, there would be little evil--there would be instead the absence of both good and evil. ...Only where there are significant values does the possibility of their thwarting, their conflict, and their destruction arise. The possibility of pain is the price paid for consciousness and the capacity for intense feeling. Sin exists as the corruption of the capacity for love. Thus God by creating good provides the context within which there is evil.⁹

As God through the power of persuasion continues to lure the world to realize higher values, the possibility of greater evils tags along. Because of real freedom which can be misused and perverted, there is not a built-in guarantee that in this world good will always triumph over evil. And there is no guarantee that we will not pollute our planet beyond its capacity to support life or that we will not blow ourselves up. But Whitehead was confident that the creative advance would never cease. God is continuously at work through "the stubborn and unyielding" structure of grace and judgment to strengthen the good which because of the very structure of reality out-balances the evil. Being in itself is good.

Also, as we have said before, God shares the suffering which accompanies existence. God prehends every

⁹Cobb, p. 96

actual occasion, feels every feeling in the universe. Just as an actual occasion prehends the occasions in its immediate past, and synthesizes their many feelings into one complex new feeling which is its own, God prehends the whole universe, takes up all of the perishing occasions into the divine entity and synthesizes them into a new unity. This is God's consequent nature which participates in the process of the creative advance. In a summary of Whitehead's system Victor Lowe writes:

God's primordial nature is but one half of his being--the permanent side, which embraces the infinity of eternal forms and seeks fluency. The temporal world is a pluralistic world of activities, creatively arising, then fading away. But "by reason of the relativity of all things," every new actual occasion in that world reacts on God--is felt by him. The content of a temporal occasion is its antecedent world synthesized and somewhat transformed by a new mode of feeling; the consequent nature of God consists of the temporal occasions transformed by an inclusive mode of feeling derived from his all-embracing primordial nature, so as to be united in a conscious, infinitely wide harmony of feeling which grows without any fading of its members. It is a creative advance devoid of "perishing."¹⁰

The participation of God in the suffering of the world is the meaning of the Christian symbol of the Cross. The Cross is not superimposed upon the world; it is structured into the nature of reality. It is in God's

¹⁰Victor Lowe, "Whitehead's Metaphysical System," in Brown, James, and Reeves, pp. 19,20.

consequent nature that evil is finally overcome and the value which has been achieved in the world is retained, is saved forever. As an actual occasion synthesizes its physical feelings by means of conceptual feelings derived from the primordial nature of God into a pattern of contrasts and intensities achieving the strength of beauty, so God synthesizes the physical feelings derived from the world by means of the conceptual feelings of the primordial nature. Using the infinite resources of primordial possibilities, God feels and integrates the occasions of the world in such a way that evil and suffering are reduced to contrasts, the jarring discords are transmuted into parts of the massiveness and intensity of God's strength of beauty and in this way evil is conquered. This is the kingdom of God which is not of this world and yet is present. As Daniel Day Williams put it, "The Kingdom of God is not a static state, but an everlastingly rich process of becoming."¹¹ Whitehead thought that this unity achieved by God's concrescence became a part of the temporal process in some way:

This action...is the love of God for the world. It is the particular providence for particular occasions.

¹¹Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 139.

What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion--the fellow-sufferer who understands.¹²

So everything is in process, including God. God and the world are partners in the adventure of the open future. God knows all of the possibilities and is persuading the evolving world to venture toward the best possible in each occasion and to actualize new possibilities in order to achieve ever higher values which add to the growing perfection of God's consequent nature. And each perishing occasion is taken up into the harmony of the Kingdom of God so that nothing of value is lost.

Guided Discussion on Personal Experience

In small groups of three or four have the participants share their own experiences of the One who calls. The reflection and sharing could revolve around these questions:

- 1) Can you identify the call forward in your experience as something distinctive, i.e., as something different than social pressure or one's own needs and desires?

¹²Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 532.

Consider the concern for truth in itself, or the power of disinterested concern for other persons.¹³

2) Can you identify clear instances in your experience of moments of grace or of judgment and their ensuing results?

¹³Cobb, pp. 45-47

Session 6

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND THE PEACE OF GOD

The final session closes the circle of this course by dealing in detail with our experience of God, thus referring again to the topic of the opening lecture, the love of God. Religious experience is approached via Whiteheadian epistemology which holds that experience is prior to consciousness and which opens the possibility of "knowledge" being interpreted more broadly. Our knowledge of God is then put in a different light.

Process theological approaches to the question of Christology, the person and work of Christ, are reviewed. Finally, the ultimate religious experience, which Whitehead calls "Peace," is discussed. This is also the topic of the paper which preceeds the lecture.

A closing celebration concludes the session and the course. The suggested context and content for this informal worship service gives an opportunity for reviewing ideas, insights, and feelings derived from the course and sharing them with others. In Whitehead's terms, after the romance of the first few sessions and the precision of the technical material, the celebration may provide an opportunity for generalizing new insights.

Study Paper by Whitehead on "Peace."

The paper is on "Peace and is from Whitehead's Adventures of Ideas, Sections II, III and IV from the Chapter, "Peace," (pp. 284-286)

CHAPTER XX

Peace

SECTION II. Something is still lacking. It is difficult to state it in terms that are wide enough. Also, where clearly distinguished and exposed in all its bearings, it assumes an air of exaggeration. Habitually it is lurking on the edge of consciousness, a modifying agency. It clings to our notion of the Platonic 'Harmony', as a sort of atmosphere. It is somewhat at variance with the notion of the 'Eros'. Also the Platonic 'Ideas' and 'Mathematical Relations' seem to kill it by their absence of 'life and motion'. Apart from it, the pursuit of 'Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art' can be ruthless, hard, cruel; and thus, as the history of the Italian Renaissance illustrates, lacking in some essential quality of civilization. The notions of 'tenderness' and of 'love' are too narrow, important though they be. We require the concept of some more general quality, from which 'tenderness'

emerges as a specialization. We are in a way seeking for the notion of a Harmony of Harmonies, which shall bind together the other four qualities, so as to exclude from our notion of civilization the restless egotism with which they have often in fact been pursued. 'Impersonality' is too dead a notion, and 'Tenderness' too narrow. I choose the term 'Peace' for that Harmony of Harmonies which calms destructive turbulence and completes civilization. Thus a society is to be termed civilized whose members participate in the five qualities—Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art, Peace.

SECTION III. The Peace that is here meant is not the negative conception of anæsthesia. It is a positive feeling which crowns the 'life and motion' of the soul. It is hard to define and difficult to speak of. It is not a hope for the future, nor is it an interest in present details. It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, un verbalized and yet momentous in its coördination of values. Its first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's preoccupation with itself. Thus Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality. There is an inversion of relative values. It is primarily a trust in the efficacy of Beauty. It is a sense that fineness of achievement is as it were a key unlocking treasures that the narrow nature of things would keep remote. There is thus involved a grasp of infinitude, an appeal beyond boundaries. Its emotional effect is the subsidence of turbulence which inhibits. More accurately, it preserves the springs of energy, and at the same time masters them for the avoidance of paralyzing distractions. The trust in the self-justification of Beauty introduces faith, where reason fails to reveal the details.

The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a gift. The deliberate aim at Peace very easily passes into its bastard substitute, Anæsthesia. In other words, in the place of a quality of 'life and motion', there is substituted their destruction. Thus Peace is the removal of inhibition and not its introduction. It results in a wider sweep of conscious interest. It enlarges the field of attention. Thus Peace is self-control at its widest,—at the width where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coördinations wider than personality. Here the real motive interests of the spirit are meant, and not the superficial play of discursive ideas. Peace is helped by such superficial width, and also promotes

it. In fact it is largely for this reason that Peace is so essential for civilization. It is the barrier against narrowness. One of its fruits is that passion whose existence Hume denied, the love of mankind as such.

SECTION IV. The meaning of Peace is most clearly understood by considering it in its relation to the tragic issues which are essential in the nature of things. Peace is the understanding of tragedy, and at the same time its preservation.

We have seen that there can be no real halt of civilization in the indefinite repetition of a perfected ideal. Staleness sets in. And this fatigue is nothing other than the creeping growth of anaesthesia, whereby that social group is gradually sinking towards nothingness. The defining characteristics are losing their importance. There may be no pain or conscious loss. There is merely a slow paralysis of surprise. And apart from surprise, intensity of feeling collapses.

Decay, Transition, Loss, Displacement belong to the essence of the Creative Advance. The new direction of aim is initiated by Spontaneity, an element of confusion. The enduring Societies with their rise, culmination, and decay, are devices to combine the necessities of Harmony and Freshness. There is the deep underlying Harmony of Nature, as it were a fluid, flexible support; and on its surface the ripples of social efforts, harmonizing and clashing in their aims at ways of satisfaction. The lower types of physical objects can have a vast endurance of inorganic life. The higher types, involving animal life and the dominance of a personality primarily mental, preserve their zest by the quick succession of stages from birth, culmination, to death. As soon as high consciousness is reached, the enjoyment of existence is entwined with pain, frustration, loss, tragedy. Amid the passing of so much beauty, so much heroism, so much daring, Peace is then the intuition of permanence. It keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at fineness beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. Each tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal: —What might have been, and was not: What can be. The tragedy was not in vain. This survival power in motive force, by reason of appeal to reserves of Beauty, marks the difference between the tragic evil and the gross evil. The inner feeling belonging to this grasp of the service of tragedy is Peace—the purification of the emotions.

Lecture: "Our Experience of God"

The Whiteheadian vision of reality can help us understand and interpret how God is experienced in a world which has only one story. Since the second story has collapsed and most of us can no longer really believe in a supernatural God out there who from time to time sallies forth to "zot" us with his Spirit, how can we understand religious experience in terms of one world--this world?

Part of our crisis of faith has come from accepting the notion that only that which can be consciously experienced through the senses is real. "Seeing is believing" is the saying, and only that which can be seen, felt, smelled, heard and tasted is real. Or, only that which can be verified through scientific experiment is real. This bias can be traced right back to David Hume, the skeptical Scot, whom we mentioned in the first lecture, and to Immanuel Kant. Kant says that we cannot perceive and therefore cannot know about the inner reality of a thing. Then Hume says, there isn't any inner reality to be known, anyway. Reality is only that which can be consciously known through the senses.

Now Whitehead comes along and turns David Hume on his head. You're starting in the wrong place, says Whitehead. When it comes to experience, you're starting with

the result of experience and then announcing, "That's all there is." You're saying that the perceptions of human consciousness exhaust the meaning of experience and the meaning of reality. Human consciousness is, overall, a late arrival on the evolutionary scene. It has arisen out of the unconscious and flickers uncertainly at best. No, experience precedes consciousness; not the other way around.

Whitehead says that if we attend to our own experience we will note that our awareness of things comes with greater or less clarity and intensity. It's like a camera coming in and out of focus, and being focused on different subjects at various distances. Many other kinds of illustrations can be given of this kind of experience. Some days I am sharp and crystal clear in my awareness and other days I'm fogged up with a cold or fatigue and say, "I'm half-here today." But even when you are not consciously aware of what's going on, you still respond to events; you are still organically related to the world. For example, have you had the experience of driving on the freeway and suddenly you become aware that you have been lost in thought and were previously unaware of what you were doing? Suddenly you realize you've been driving along anyway, maintaining a certain distance behind the car in front of you, slowing down and speeding up as required. Perhaps you even had to jam on the brakes, responding before you were clearly consciously

aware you were doing it. The data was being fed in from your environment and you were responding to it on a level below conscious decision. You were making decisions but on a level other than focused conscious awareness.

According to process philosophy, this is what is happening all of the time. The web of actual occasions, the fabric of reality of which we are an integral part is impinging on us with the pulses of experience, the feelings which make up reality, the prehensions of actual occasions, all of the time. Of all of these feelings relatively few reach the level of conscious awareness. Whitehead says there is another way, another mode, by which we are in touch with reality other than through what appears through the senses. This mode is made by prehending the actual occasions in our environment. It is by feeling the feelings of other entities. These feelings are transmitted through the body to the brain and so become present to the dominant occasion, the self which is aware, and has its seat of existence in the brain. These transmitted feelings are the primary causes of what we sense. They really effect us, so he names this mode of perception "causal efficacy." So the pulses of experience in our environment are coming to us through the mode, by the path, of causal efficacy, but it takes a little time for them to travel from there to here. Since the occasion which is happening in that table at this

moment and the occasion which is happening in my brain at this moment are happening at exactly the same time, the same split-second, they can't have any causal effect on each other. Only an occasion which has happened in the past can have a causal effect on another occasion, since the effect comes through the transfer of feeling from one occasion to another. So occasions which are contemporary can't affect each other. My awareness of the table is always a split second behind the occasions which are causing that awareness and which constituted the table at that moment. It's similar to the time lag between seeing the bolt of lightening and hearing the thunder, because light travels faster than sound. But the process is much, much faster.

Well, if we are always becoming aware of things a split-second after they happen, why does it seem like we're experiencing reality right now, in the immediate present? This is because, says Whitehead, the way things seem to be, the way things appear to us, the way they are presented to our senses, is through a second mode of perception. This way of perceiving does happen in the immediate moment, so Whitehead calls it "presentational immediacy." That's the way things are presented to us in the immediate moment. So, says Whitehead, there are two ways in which we perceive the world. The first and primary way is through "causal efficacy" in which we feel reality. The second way is

through "presentational immediacy" in which we become consciously aware of how things appear. There is a distinction between reality and appearance.

Whitehead disagrees with Kant who said we cannot have any knowledge of reality, of things-in-themselves. On the contrary, says Whitehead, our prehensions of other actual entities are the primary form of experience, the raw material and foundation upon which our conscious awareness sits. Whitehead says Hume, along with most everybody else, confines his analysis of perception and knowledge to what we know through the mode of "presentational immediacy," which is the way things appear, the way they seem to be. Hume starts in the wrong place. The way things appear is the end result of the process of perception and is derived from the reality we feel through causal efficacy. Furthermore, the way things appear to be is shaped a great deal by the person who is perceiving them--by that person's focal point of attention, interest, and mental and emotional condition. And also by biological equipment: some people are color-blind. I'm near-sighted. The person who bases knowledge of reality on the saying "Seeing is believing" is in trouble, because "what you see ain't what you get."

A primary example of reality which cannot be perceived by the senses, i.e., through appearance in the mode of presentational immediacy, is the human self. Each of us

experiences ourselves as a reality and we also experience other selves. We know that the self, the person, the "I", the soul, is located in the brain somehow, but cannot be identified with the brain. The self cannot be seen by looking at the body, but at the same time is so intertwined with the body, especially the brain, that physical damage can change personality.

Whitehead says the human self is a dominant actual occasion which occurs in the environment of the brain. In a previous lecture we talked about societies of occasions. Occasions always occur in groups and if a group has order, has some pattern, because of a common characteristic, it is a society. Societies maintain themselves through time because of this mutual common characteristic. When we come to high-grade complex occasions, instead of the society being composed of a group of interrelated occasions happening in the same location, it may be just one actual occasion which arises as an instance in a single series of occasions. This is what Whitehead calls a "serially ordered society." It is a society of occasions which happen one at a time and pass the common characteristic which gives them order from each one to the next. A serially ordered society is what Whitehead calls a person.

So in process thinking the self or soul is an actual occasion which is continuously becoming and perishing

like every actual occasion, but is technically called a society because it maintains a continuity of common characteristics. You are a society of occasions. Of course the occasions happen so rapidly that it seems like a continuous stream of consciousness rather than an awareness of individual drops of experience. This is a non-substantial view of the soul. There is no underlying soul substance. There is no underlying self which goes through changes of time. There is, rather, a transmission of incredibly complex syntheses of feelings from one occasion to the next. The self is a dominant occasion because it makes decisions not only for itself, but also for the whole organism, the whole body. In such an occasion the mental pole predominates and becomes developed to the point where consciousness arises.

The human self is a reality which is invisible. It is experienced only in the mode of causal efficacy. It is not presented to our senses but we experience its reality. Our experience of God is the same way. God is not presented to us through our senses; God is present at the level of actual occasions and is experienced only in the mode of causal efficacy.¹ This is why our experience of God's presence is generally unconscious. Experience is prior to

¹John Cobb, A Christian Natural Theology, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 236

and the foundation of consciousness, but our conscious awareness is dominated by the perceptions pouring in through the senses. The arena of appearance, of presentational immediacy, is not the location of God's action and presence.

God's action is expressed through the initial aim which brings an actual occasion into existence and gives it its ideal purpose. It is God's initial aim which triggers the becoming of every new occasion. Even though the ground from which new occasions arise is the web of interrelationships of past occasions, the decisive factor is God. Thus God is experienced as the ground of our being. The very fact of your existence is due to the causal efficacy of God.

We experience God in our sense of purpose. There is a sense of an ideal, a goal toward which we ought to aim and there is also a subjective desire for what I want out of this moment. The fact that there is a sense of purpose is due to the causal efficacy of God.

We experience God through our feeling of order. The fact that our environment is arranged in such a way that life is maintained and relationships are possible is because, in John Cobb's words, "God so adjusts the ideal aim of each occasion as to achieve relationships of social order and personal order. The gradually evolving order of the universe is his work, apart from which all higher phases of

experience would be impossible."²

Everyone experiences God as the ground of being, the ground of purpose and the ground of order, but these experiences rarely enter consciousness. And even if they do, they may not be interpreted as experiences of God. We experience our existence as not our own doing, as something given to us which we did not request, but it may not occur to us that there is a giver. And, "we experience ourselves as having purposes, and more vaguely as failing to be all that we could or should be."³ But we are not conscious of God's initial aim. We are also aware of natural order and may even marvel at the patterns of flowers or the beauty of a sunset, but may see this as something inherent in nature itself. "Isn't nature wonderful?" we say.

So even though we experience the presence of God all of the time, it may never enter consciousness as a religious experience, unless one already has a vision of reality in which faith in the reality of God is an integral part.

But, how can it be, one may persist in asking, that God is so continuously present and active and still is not known? John Cobb says it's kind of like the weight of the atmosphere. We experience it constantly without being

²Ibid., p. 227

³Ibid.

conscious of it, although if it were suddenly removed we would be aware of it.⁴ Since, as Whitehead says, consciousness is based on contrast and negation, we do not notice something which is constantly present and never absent. We notice elephants because they are usually absent. God's constant presence works against its being noticed, and since it is God's presence which holds the world together, so that if God were to be absent there would be nothing, consciousness by contrast is impossible to experience.⁵

However, believing in God heightens awareness of God's presence. God's initial aim is always active whether one believes it is there or not, and since God's aim is received as one element within the totality of prehensions being received through the causal efficacy of all of one's immediate past occasions, the experience is open to different interpretations. Our experience of God always comes mixed with our experience of others and of ourselves. But those who affirm God's presence and seek a raising of consciousness, a sharpening of sensitivity to that presence, maximize God's causal efficacy. In other words, it is possible for you to play down the stuff coming at you from the world and yourself and tune in God more clearly. And

⁴Ibid., p. 232.

⁵Ibid.

the result of this tuning in carries over to following occasions and accumulates, making it possible to respond more easily to God's aim the next time. This could be called a conversion experience in some people's religious language.

When that happens, life itself is a religious experience--the fact of existence is received with gratefulness and is consciously viewed as a gift of God. The sense of purpose is a fresh opportunity from the One who calls us into the future, and the sense of order is felt as a sense of fellowship, of belonging, of participation in an all-inclusive community of love and beauty. Faith can be self-verifying.

The more intense religious experiences some people have can also be explained within this same Whiteheadian theological framework. The experience of God as the Holy One, and experiences of communion and ecstasy can be seen as various degrees of valuing up the feelings received from God, while valuing down the feelings received from other sources.⁶

Christians understand their religious experience and their conception of God to be integrally related in some way to the event of Jesus Christ. No theology which calls

⁶Ibid., p. 233

itself Christian can ignore the issue of the person and work of Jesus. The early church fathers used Greek philosophy as the conceptual framework within which to think about how Jesus is related to God and how this relationship makes a difference to those of us who stand within the Christian faith. They were hampered in their efforts of trying to express the relationship of God and Jesus because they were saddled with the notion of substance as reality. Individual substances were external to one another, so they were trying to express the Christian experience in a metaphysical framework which couldn't carry it very well. The church wanted to say that in Jesus we encounter the reality of God, that God became man; but that at the same time Jesus was still really human, still one of us. There was a terrific fight over how to express this. The school at Alexandria said Jesus' soul was displaced by God. The church at Antioch said Jesus was a man on whom God operated and indwelt. The ancient creeds reflected this struggle: "...being of one substance with the Father..."

Whiteheadian theologians have been working on expressing the meaning of the relationship between God and Jesus within a process conceptuality. It may be that, for the first time in Christian history, we now have a metaphysical conceptuality which can adequately express what the Greek church fathers were never able to say. Process

philosophy explains how one actual entity can become internal to another--how there can be a mutual indwelling or interrelationship without giving up the individual identities of either entity.

John Cobb⁷ and David Griffin⁸ have been working on this. In general, the approach these theologians are taking is to see God's presence in Jesus as a special instance of the way God is present in every person. God is present in every person as the initial aim of each occasion. In every person most of the time and in most persons all of the time there is a tension between God's initial aim and the person's subjective aim. So God's purpose is experienced as a demand I don't want to do, but which I ought to do. Jesus, however, had such a sensitivity to God that his subjective aim was the same as God's initial aim for him. Thus he fulfilled God's purpose, had a unique consciousness of God and was the supreme revelation of God's primordial aim for the world.

John Cobb emphasizes Jesus' sense of authority as

⁷ John Cobb, "A Whiteheadian Christology" in Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves (eds.) in Process Philosophy and Christian Thought, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971).

⁸ David R. Griffin, A Process Christology, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973).

contrasted with the Hebrew prophets. The prophets were conscious of being spokesmen for God but did not identify themselves with the message. But when Jesus spoke, his "I" was identified with God, with the Logos, the purpose which gives life and form to the world. He was uniquely transparent to God in his person.

David Griffin emphasizes the uniqueness of God's initial aims given to Jesus. Jesus was able to receive the aims which God would like to be able to give to every person. So in receiving and fulfilling these initial aims which express God's general primordial aim for every person, Jesus is the supreme revelation and embodiment of God's will and character. Both Cobb and Griffin point to the mutual immanence which God and Jesus enjoyed. This mutual immanence of being in one another is not metaphysically unique since God and every occasion are mutually immanent. God is present in every occasion and every occasion is in God. But the relationship of God and Jesus was historically unique because of its quality and because of its historical effect. The Christ event had outstanding causal efficacy.

What has been the effect of Jesus' revelation of God? Cobb interprets Jesus as the occasion by which a threshold was crossed into a new mode of existence. This

new mode Cobb calls "spiritual existence."⁹ Jesus radicalized the demand to love, to be open to the neighbor and to trust God. Through the impact of his person and message, a raising of consciousness with a new kind of transcendence was introduced into history bringing new possibilities for love.

Griffin points to the impact of Jesus' vision of reality within which a person has a better opportunity to respond to God's aims. The content of Jesus' revelation has the power to change a person's attitude toward God and thus to open him/her to receiving those aims which more directly express God's character and purpose. In other words, one becomes more like Jesus:

...after a genuine revelation, in which man's will has been converted, the divine aims will be experienced as empowering rather than restrictive, as stimulating self-fulfillment rather than seeking to repress.¹⁰

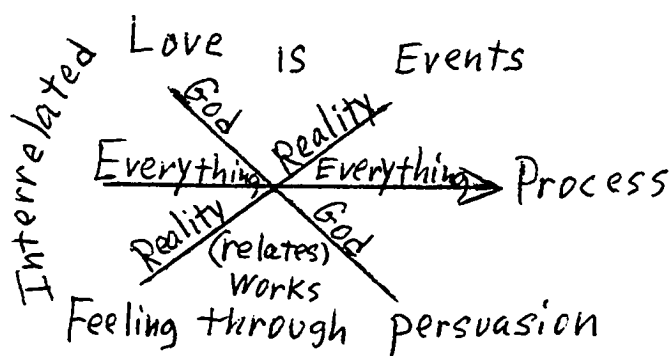
Of course, I have greatly oversimplified Cobb's and Griffin's treatments of Christology, as I have oversimplified every topic discussed in these lectures. This course is intended to be introductory and suggestive. It skims the surface of everything seeking to point here and there

⁹John Cobb, The Structure of Christian Existence, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 107

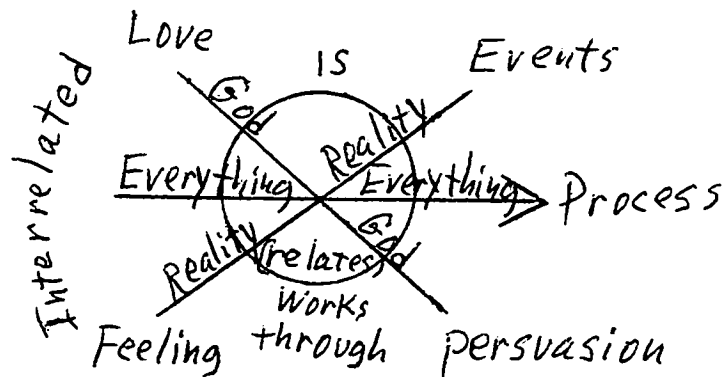
¹⁰Griffin, p. 243.

and to give a taste of this and that through simple summarizing. The aim has been to paint with a broad brush a picture of the Whiteheadian vision of reality and some of the theological implications of that vision. We have also tried to show why such a vision is needed in our time by tracing the historical reasons for the present crisis of faith, a crisis which has made it difficult for people in our culture to believe in the reality of God. Since we have had to leave out, to negativelyprehend, so many possibilities of things which could have been presented, the satisfaction of completion is tinged with a sense of what might have been, but isn't.

The structure and emblem for this course has been the six armed asterisk which suggests an actual occasion, and which is also my summary of the Whiteheadian vision:



Now I want to draw the circle to indicate a completed occasion and to point to "Peace."



The crown of religious experience is that to which Whitehead points with the word "Peace." You have read sections from Adventures of Ideas in which he tries to talk about it in turgid words and phrases which are more poetry than prose. "It is difficult to state it in terms that are wide enough," he writes. "It is hard to define and difficult to speak of."¹¹ For all of his love of words, Whitehead insisted that words cannot finally define reality. Reality is just there, like God's love is there, and we experience it and try to talk about it. But words are

¹¹Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 284, 285.

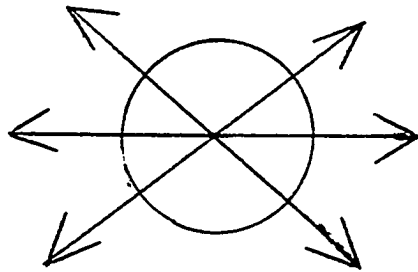
always finally inadequate and can only point to meaning. Logicians make a mistake, says Whitehead, when they confuse the verbal statement of a proposition with the meaning of the proposition itself. The meaning of the statement exists before the statement is made, and can never be fully contained in language. So it is with the depth of the meaning of Peace.

Peace is the Harmony of Harmonies. It is that which brings a final balancing of massiveness and intensity and an integration of seemingly conflicting aspects of reality into a completeness. The emblem of the completed occasion, which I nicknamed the Whiteheadian Mandala, seeks to point to that notion. A mandala is a symbol of wholeness, the wholeness of maturity in which the springs of creativity flow freely because the energy which had been previously used to battle conflicts and which had been drained by distractions can now be freely channeled into creating value.

Whitehead's whole system is a mandala. His vision of reality brings together into a new unity the classical dualisms which split reality into conflicting opposites: God and the world, subject and object, mind and matter, spirit and body, immanence and transcendence, time and eternity, the one and the many, permanence and change, creator and creature have all been brought into a unity

which does not obliterate either side. Whitehead has replaced the old dualisms in which neither side could really touch the other with a balanced duality within unity.

But his mandala, although it is in harmony, is not at rest. It is perfect, but it is a growing perfection, always in process. The mandala emblem we have here seeks to point to this by retaining the vector arrow after the circle is drawn. Say, perhaps it would be symbolically more accurate to draw vector arrows on every arm:



since the Whiteheadian vision of reality envisions an expanding universe. And that would better illustrate the notion of the growing perfection of God.

Peace is not Anaesthesia, says Whitehead. It is not the rest of unconscious sleep; it is, on the contrary, a sharpening of consciousness which enlarges the field of attention. It is not an absence, a void without feeling; it is, like the Hebrew Shalom, the presence of well-being:

It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, unverbilized and yet momentous in its co-ordination of values. It's first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's preoccupation with itself.¹²

The deep metaphysical insight which comes as a gift, as grace, is, I believe, the double insight that everything is interrelated in God's love and that I am included in this interrelationship. It is the insight which comes when Whitehead's vision of reality is personally appropriated. Paul points to it when he writes, "I am sure nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

Peace is experiencing a kind of ultimate interrelatedness in which self-concern is laid to rest because of a trust, a faith, that what I am and have accomplished will continue to have meaning and significance. This is what I think Whitehead means by "a trust in the efficacy of Beauty."¹³ Peace has to do with knowing I am known--I am known and valued, and what I do makes a difference not only to others, but also to God. It means that in spite of what Whitehead calls the "perpetual perishing"¹⁴ of the world,

¹²Ibid., p. 285

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality, (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 513.

my life is not just finally "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing," but has a lasting significance. As Schubert Ogden puts it:

...Because God's love, radically unlike ours, is pure and unbounded, and because he, therefore, both can and does participate fully in the being of all his creatures, the present moment for him never slips into the past as it does for us. Instead, every moment retains its vividness and intensity forever within his completely perfect love and judgment. He knows all things for just what they are, and he continues to know and cherish them throughout the endless ages of the future in all the richness of their actual being. In other words, because God not only affects, but also is affected by, whatever exists, all things are in every present quite literally resurrected or restored in his own everlasting life, from which they can nevermore be cast out.¹⁵

Closing Celebration

The purpose of the closing celebration is to provide a worship event which will actively review and summarize the participants' involvement in the course. The room should be decorated with the pictures painted in session four and perhaps the yarn design produced in session three could be used as a worship center. The room arrangements should be informal and the atmosphere encourage participation.

The celebration could include hymns, readings, silence, sharing and a "cosmic hug" to act out mutual interrelatedness and affirmation. A "cosmic hug" is done

¹⁵Schubert Ogden, The Reality of God, (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 226.

by the people arranging themselves in a line, shoulder to shoulder, with all facing in one direction. Everyone puts their arms around the waists of their neighbors. Then the person on the end of the line (either end, but only one) begins the process by turning inward toward the next person in such a way (with everyone still having their arms about each other) that the line is rolled up upon itself, with the end person in the center of a kind of "jelly roll" which looks like this:



When the line is all rolled up and everyone is facing toward the center, everybody squeezes and the people in the center get a "cosmic hug." Then the person on the outside end moves to unroll the line (don't let loose!). When the line is unrolled, the person who is on the end which began the initial rolling up process goes to the other end of the line, and the new end person begins the process of rolling up and squeezing. This continues until everyone in the line has had the opportunity to be on the beginning end and thus also to be in the center of the hug. An optimum number for a line is about a dozen. Less than

six is not very "cosmic," and more than fifteen becomes unwieldy and time-consuming.

Here is a suggested order with materials for the celebration:

Hymn: "Love Divine, All Love Excelling."¹⁶

Reading: I John 4: 7-21.

Silence

Reading: Religion in the Making, Chapter IV, Section 5, by Alfred North Whitehead. (pp. 151-154)

Silence

A period of sharing on the topic: "An insight I have received from this course experience is..."

Hymn: "Once to Every Man and Nation"¹⁷

"Cosmic Hug"

Closing Circle and Benediction.

¹⁶The Methodist Hymnal, (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964), #283.

¹⁷Ibid., #242.

RELIGION IN THE MAKING

quent as it stands in his vision is also added. Thus God in the world is the perpetual vision of the road which leads to the deeper realities.

V. CONCLUSION

God is that function in the world by reason of which our purposes are directed to ends which in our own consciousness are impartial as to our own interests. He is that element in life in virtue of which judgment stretches beyond facts of existence to values of existence. He is that element in virtue of which our purposes extend beyond values for ourselves to values for others. He is that element in virtue of which the attainment of such a value for others transforms itself into value for ourselves.

He is the binding element in the world. The consciousness which is individual in us, is universal in him: the love which is partial in us is all-embracing in him. Apart from him there could be no world, because there could be no adjustment of individuality. His pur-

[158]

TRUTH AND CRITICISM

pose in the world is quality of attainment. His purpose is always embodied in the particular ideals relevant to the actual state of the world. Thus all attainment is immortal in that it fashions the actual ideals which are God in the world as it is now. Every act leaves the world with a deeper or a fainter impress of God. He then passes into his next relation to the world with enlarged, or diminished, presentation of ideal values.

He is not the world, but the valuation of the world. In abstraction from the course of events, this valuation is a necessary metaphysical function. Apart from it, there could be no definite determination of limitation required for attainment. But in the actual world, He confronts what is actual in it with what is possible for it. Thus He solves all indeterminations.

The passage of time is the journey of the world towards the gathering of new ideas into actual fact. This adventure is upwards and downwards. Whatever ceases to ascend, fails

[159]

RELIGION IN THE MAKING

to preserve itself and enters upon its inevitable path of decay. It decays by transmitting its nature to slighter occasions of actuality, by reason of the failure of the new forms to fertilize the perceptive achievements which constitute its past history. The universe shows us two aspects: on one side it is physically wasting, on the other side it is spiritually ascending.

It is thus passing with a slowness, inconceivable in our measures of time, to new creative conditions, amid which the physical world, as we at present know it, will be represented by a ripple barely to be distinguished from non-entity.

The present type of order in the world has arisen from an unimaginable past, and it will find its grave in an unimaginable future. There remain the inexhaustible realm of abstract forms, and creativity, with its shifting character ever determined afresh by its own creatures, and God, upon whose wisdom all forms of order depend.

[160]

6272

;

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- Beardslee, William A. A House for Hope. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.
- Brown, Delwin, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves (eds.) Process Philosophy and Christian Thought. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971.
- Bultmann, Rudolph K. Primitive Christianity. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- Christian, William A. An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. A Christian Natural Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965.
- _____. God and The World. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969.
- _____. The Structure of Christian Existence. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967.
- Collins, James. The Emergence of the Philosophy of Religion. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- Ford, Lewis. "The Non-Temporality of Whitehead's God," Philosophical Quarterly. (September 1973), 313.
- Griffin, David R. A Process Christology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973.
- Hartshorne, Charles. The Divine Relativity. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- Lee, Bernard. The Becoming of the Church. New York: Paulist Press, 1974.
- The Methodist Hymnal. Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964.
- Bible. N.T. Greek. Novum Testamentum Graece. Ed. by Eberhard Nestle. Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1948.

- Neumann, Erich. The Origins and History of Consciousness.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. The Self and the Dramas of History.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.
- Ogden, Schubert M. The Reality of God. New York: Harper
& Row, 1966.
- Sherburne, Donald. A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality.
New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Smith, A. J. M., (ed.) Seven Centuries of Verse: English
and American. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947.
- Toffler, Alvin. Future Shock. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. Adventures of Ideas. 1933;
New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- _____. The Aims of Education. 1929; New York:
Macmillan, 1967.
- _____. Process and Reality. New York: Macmillan, 1929.
- _____. Religion in the Making. 1926; rpt. New York:
World, 1960.
- Williams, Daniel Day. The Spirit and the Forms of Love.
New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

LECTURES

- Beardslee, William. "Openness to the New in Process
Philosophy and Apocalyptic." Address at the School of
Theology at Claremont, March 27, 1972. STC Library
Tape 625b.
- Birch, Charles. Address on evolutionary theory at the School of
Theology at Claremont, April 17, 1974.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. "Christian Understanding of Human
Existence." Course taught at the School of Theology at
Claremont, Fall, 1974.

_____. "Understanding the World Views of Modern Man."
Address at the School of Theology at Claremont, November
3, 1970. STC Library tape 483a.

_____. "Whitehead's Philosophy and its Religious
Relevance." Course taught at the School of Theology at
Claremont, Spring, 1974.

Fowler, Dean. Address on Whitehead's theory of evolution at
the School of Theology at Claremont, April 3, 1974.

Griffin, David. "Pan-experientialism and the Problems of
Evil, Epiphenomenalism, Evolution, Ecology and
Evangelism." Address at the School of Theology at
Claremont, January 17, 1974. STC Library tape 758a.

GLOSSARY

Actual entities: the final real things which make up the world, also called actual occasions.

Actual occasions: used interchangeably with 'actual entities' except when referring to God. The molecular events or 'bundles of feelings' which compose the universe.

Actual world: the given totality of past occasions from which a becoming occasion derives its content.

Causal efficacy: the way or mode of knowing through the direct feeling of the antecedent actual occasions which make up one's environment.

Consequent nature of God: the aspect of God which feels all of the actual occasions of the universe, takes these perished occasions into the divine nature and thus grows; the physical pole of God which participates in the process of the creative advance of the universe and is growing.

Concrescence: the process by which an actual occasion 'pulls itself together,' 'grows together,' or integrates its received feelings to become what it is.

_____ phases of: the analysis of the three 'stages' of the process of concrescence into 1) the initial stage of receiving data from previous occasions, 2) the middle stage of synthesizing or integrating the many received feelings into one complex feeling, and 3) the final stage of 'satisfaction.'

Creative advance: the never ending process of the arising of new occasions and thus the continuous introduction of novelty.

Dominant occasion: the super complex occasion in animals which makes decisions not only for itself, but also for the organism as a whole; the seat of intelligence and consciousness.

Enduring object: something which has continuous existence in space and time; an object in the ordinary sense.

Extensive continuum: our usual space-time frame of reference, but understood as completely full of actual occasions which are in touch with one another (there is no 'empty space') in an extensive continuum.

Immanent: within; often in the sense of being a constituent factor, as God is immanent in the world or the past is immanent in the present.

Initial aim: God's purpose for each actual occasion which triggers the process of its becoming and is the best possible goal of its satisfaction.

Mental pole: the capacity of every actual occasion to receive the conceptual possibilities which are necessary to define its existence. God's mental pole is the whole infinite structure of possibilities, i.e., the primordial nature of God.

Metaphysics: the most general type of philosophical thinking; a "vision of reality" within which everything is set; metaphysical presuppositions apply equally to every reality.

Nexus: an interrelation of actual occasions; a particular togetherness.

Objective immortality: the status of an actual occasion after it has perished. It is a part of the past and thus is objective or public and it is a part of the consequent nature of God and thus is immortal.

Ontology: the study of the nature of being.

Ontological principle: Whitehead's principle that reality is ultimately only actual entities, so everything which exists must have a home in an actual entity.

Physical pole: the capacity of every actual occasion to receive the feelings (energy, prehensions) of prior occasions. God's physical pole is the consequent nature of God, the feeling of all the occasions of the universe.

Prehend: to feel a feeling or a conceptual possibility.

Prehension: a term which includes 'feeling' but is broader. It refers to the external world and involves emotion, purpose, valuation and causation, i.e., everything which comes to the actual occasion to be included in it. Prehensions are physical, conceptual, hybrid and negative. A physical prehension is the energy transmitted by an antecedent actual occasion. A conceptual prehension is the feeling of a possibility or a valuation and is derived from the primordial nature of God (the structure

of possibilities). A hybrid prehension is an idea derived from an antecedent occasion. A negative prehension is a prehension which is cut off, not allowed in, and which leaves an emotional tone of what might have been.

Presentational immediacy: the way or mode of knowing through the senses, especially sight, in which the presented world is perceived as immediately present. The realm of scientific analysis.

Primordial aim: the original, eternal purpose of God.

Primordial nature of God: the eternal, never changing aspect of God which is the infinite structure of possibilities.

Principle of limitation: the work of God in creating new occasions through presenting possibilities in a structure of graded relevance, thus giving the becoming occasion the opportunity of deciding how to define (limit) itself within an overall structure of order. Whitehead's definition of the Logos.

Process: there are two types of process, 1) the flow of feelings from one actual occasion to another, i.e. the vector relationship, 2) the procedure by which an actual occasion pulls itself together, i.e. concrescence.

Satisfaction: the third phase of the becoming of an occasion in which it reaches its culmination, becomes what it is and then perishes to give itself to the next occasion.

Serially ordered society: actual occasions which have the defining characteristics of a society in common but arise one at a time instead of together; when the occasion is dominant, a serially ordered society is a person.

Society: a group of occasions which share and maintain a common defining characteristic.

Subjective aim: an actual occasion's own purpose for becoming.

Subjective form: the way in which an actual occasion feels a prehension. The subjective form is determined by the occasion's subjective aim.

Transcendent: not being caught within or entirely conditioned by one's environment.

Valuations: assigning more (valuing up) or less (valuing down) importance to a prehension for its role in an occasion's satisfaction.

Vector relationship: the flow of energy or feelings from a perishing occasion to a becoming one. The direction of the flow is indicated by an arrow.

Vision of reality: a culture's presuppositions about the nature of reality and the way everything relates; a metaphysics is a conceptual formulation of a vision of reality.